Stuart Blackburn

Print, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India

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INTRODUCTION
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This book began when I realised what at the time seemed to be a curious fact about the history of printing in Tamil: in the early nineteenth century, most printed books were collections of folklore. I was not then aware of the almost proverbial saying in the literature on printing—that print did not produce new books, only more old books. That initial curiosity and ignorance has grown into this study of the convergence between print and folklore in a colonial context, mostly in Tamil and mostly in nineteenth-century Madras. The first few chapters look back, as well, to the arrival of print in the sixteenth century and describe the emergence of new literary practices in the eighteenth century; in the final chapter the argument is extended beyond south India. The core of the book, however, focuses on the phenomenon of printed folklore in the colonial century in what was then the second largest city in India.

If this book is a study in literary and cultural history, it is also a sceptic's exploration of the concepts of 'print culture' and of 'print revolution'. As a folklorist I have always been a little wary of concepts which, in some hands, would render obsolete the object of my research; on the other hand, no scholar can ignore the influence of print, especially its power to cast oral traditions in new forms, to new audiences, across linguistic and geographical boundaries. Only after finishing three books on three different oral traditions in south India (ritual singing, shadow puppet theatre and folktales), did I come to realise that a thorough understanding of south Indian folklore required a knowledge of its

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parallel existence in print. While we know that folklore exists in a wide range of forms, oral, written and printed, many of us have been reluctant to embrace that fact in research.[1] This book is my attempt to do so.

The reluctance to study printed folklore derives, I suspect, from its apparent paradox. Living speech on the static page appears to be an oxymoron, one of those 'messy' concepts described years ago by Mary Douglas, which straddles two incompatible categories and creates conceptual dissonance.[2] But if printed folklore represents a dichotomy between orality and print, it is a false dichotomy, for we know both from experience and research that oral traditions are not incompatible with print. Mysteriously, however, claims of their mutual exclusivity linger on, typically in an evolutionary sequence in which the face-to-face relation between performer and audience dies a quick death when anonymous authors (behind whom stand anonymous printers, publishers and editors) are read in print. The deep causes of this perceived dichotomy may lie in some human desire to preserve the past against the vanishing present, but we can trace its intellectual origins to the late eighteenth century, when scholars rediscovered 'the allegedly oral, spontaneous, and "popular" culture of the Middle Ages'.[3]

Emerging within the late eighteenth-century Romantic movement, the origins of folklore, both as concept and as discipline, are stamped with the polarisation of the pure oral and the defiled industrial age, of which the printing press was an agent. This search for, and invention of, 'authentic' folk traditions threatened by industrialising Europe has been described in detail by Regina Bendix, who argues that this construction of folklore, as antithetical to modernity, is conceptually flawed but emotionally and politically satisfying;[4] and the legacy of that Enlightenment polarisation haunts still, as 'phantoms of Romanticism', in the words of Roger Abrahams.[5]

This magical persistence of the untenable dichotomy between orality and modernity, which lives on in the concept of a 'primary oral culture', is partly explained when we realise that it replicates that early 'discovery' of the Romantics. Even before the concepts of a print culture and the print revolution widened the gap between orality and other modes of communication, earlier terms such as the 'logic of writing'

and 'oral culture' had assigned them to separate spheres.[6] Writing, it was claimed, had initiated its own 'revolution that was the daughter of the alphabet and the mother of printing'.[7] The putative print revolution simply hardened the lines of a false dichotomy already drawn, first by the Romantics and then by modern scholars, who claimed that a metallic technology, and not just ephemeral handwriting, had supplanted oral traditions.

Yet, time and time again, whenever a specific case is investigated, we find that print, writing and oral traditions tend to coexist, although sometimes for different purposes, usually in different spheres and often with different consequences. This book will present another demonstration of the commingling thesis, but it will also go a bit further: it will argue that print, in Tamil in the nineteenth century, far from widening the gap between literary culture and oral tradition, actually bridged it and brought them together in the form of printed folklore.[8] Folklore, in print, even occupied a prominent place in Tamil literary culture in the nineteenth century; the forces that did, eventually, sideline folklore were as much attitudinal as technological. Those attitudes were articulated in the many negotiations between tradition and modernity, two concepts as fiercely contested in the nineteenth century as they are today. As used in this book, 'modernity' refers broadly to that condition which a diverse range of factors, from rationality and hygiene to the novel, were thought to create, often in imitation of European models but always as a break with 'tradition', that set of beliefs and practices, including language and literature, thought to represent authentic Indian culture.[9] The search for authenticity alongside modernity in nineteenth-century Madras led to certain conceptions and uses of 'folklore', not unlike their European counterparts, behind which lay conflicting attitudes towards folk traditions. In Sudhir Chandra's telling phrase, folklore was thought to represent a repository of the 'vernacular mind',[10] but according to some that native knowledge was better left buried than recovered.

When these attitudes are considered, the false dichotomy of printed folklore is not so easily resolved; indeed, in the context of colonial India, the paradox of a modern technology in service of premodern traditions

takes on new complexities. Briefly stated, folklore ran counter to the modernising project: superstitions, primitive practices, fanciful legends and indecent tales, and more, were targeted by the educational, religious and literary reform campaigns of the nineteenth century. These folk traditions were precisely what had to disappear or be stamped out in favour of a colonial modernity. But there was simultaneously a reluctance to let go of those traditions; they were connected to the discredited past, but they were also repositories of cultural and personal memories. This much was not peculiar to India, or Madras, since folklore, everywhere and always, provokes ambivalence; it is both what we know best and what we wish to leave behind. Folklore is seen as a source of identity and pride for small groups, even families, but also, and because of this familiarity, it is regarded as a symbol of the provincial, a marker of ignorant tradition. In the context of nineteenth-century Madras, this conflict between folklore as cultural identity yet unmodernity was compounded by the mounting pressure for modernisation and reform. Toward the end of the century, this ambivalence generated the image of the vanishing village, the loss of pre-colonial culture, that was momentarily arrested and contemplated on the printed page.

This book: aims and limitations

In telling the story of the early centuries of printing and folklore in Tamil, I have adopted, and been forced to adopt, a selective focus. For one thing, I will have more to say about print than folklore simply because the historical record is thicker for print than for oral traditions. Perhaps making a virtue of necessity, one of my aims is to provide the reader with a history, or at least a historical summary, of printing in Tamil, in the belief that such a chronology is valuable in and of itself. For that reason, the next chapter begins with the early history of Tamil printing in the second half of the sixteenth century, and continues to bring the narrative up through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The discussion of new literary practices in the eighteenth century will describe the fascinating print rivalry between Lutheran and Jesuit missionaries, one of whom, C.G. Beschi, wrote the first folklore text to

enter Tamil literary culture. The printing of folklore, however, arrived only in the early nineteenth century, which is the focus of the remaining chapters. Centring this study in nineteenth-century Madras, I will at times take up certain events and topics that, although apparently unrelated to either printing or folklore, turn out to have shaped their histories: the campaign for a new vernacular, the educational policies of Fort St George, anglicisation and missionary activity, in particular, played a significant role in our story, largely by marginalising Tamil and Tamil printing, including Tamil folklore in print. Although the history of early Tamil printing in Madras overlaps with that of Telugu (as indicated at various points in Chapter 3), the relationship between them falls outside my linguistic competence and the scope of this book.[11]

Another limitation of this book is that it focuses, almost exclusively, on the book and barely touches on other forms of literary production. This means that I will only briefly describe, at the end of this Introduction, the written and performed literature composed at courts and *matts* during the Nayaka period, from the late sixteenth to late eighteenth centuries. It is interesting to note, however, that the literary history of the Nayaka courts stands in sharp contrast to the history of printing during the same period: whereas Nayaka literature is characterised by the production of new literary genres, printing contributed to the emergence of new literary practices. Print, as already noted, does not tend to produce new genres or texts but rather to reproduce more texts in old genres; early Tamil printing did contribute to the growth of one genre—discursive prose—but in a form that owed little to Nayaka courtly compositions. Curiously, only one court in this period, that of Serfoji II at Tanjore, had a printing press, and only in the first years of the nineteenth century. Eventually, by about 1820, the literary culture of the Nayaka courts began to converge with the literary culture developing in Madras. We will see that British patronage attracted court pundits to the metropolis and that those pundits edited and published traditional texts; indeed, the role of these pundits, and especially of pundit-publishers, in the history of Tamil printing is one of the major findings of this book. Somewhat later, by mid-century, the new genres of the Nayaka courts, some of which attempted to depict

folk culture, had entered print in Madras. Before 1800, however, there were few points of contact between traditional literary culture of the *matts* and the new developments inspired by print.

The focus on printed books also means that I will consider other forms of print (newspapers and journals) only as part of the broad history of print; as one example, the history of Tamil newspapers will be described in Chapter 3, where it helps to explain the nexus between pundits, publishing and public opinion. Nor will I consider all forms of folklore; instead, I will concentrate on folktales simply because these collections of tales were the earliest, the most numerous and the most widely used samples of printed folklore. This means that I do not cover the many Tamil dramas written in the nineteenth century; although plays were written by pundits and became a popular form of entertainment in Madras, they are not folklore and were not a significant part of the print world in Madras until the 1870s. My choice of topic also circumscribes the social compass of this book: it will not describe the history and uses of folklore as oral tradition, but only of folklore in print, which means mainly in Madras and mainly among elites, both Tamil and European.

A final selective focus is temporal. Although this is a study of printed folklore in the nineteenth century, it concentrates on the first half of the century, and even more selectively on its first three decades. There are reasons for this choice. Whereas most histories of nineteenth-century Madras or the Tamil country begin after 1850, because that was when Indian political movements gained a public face and entered official records in greater detail, the history of printing is different.[12] Already several centuries old by 1800, printing changed rapidly in the early decades of the century: the first Tamil authors of printed books, the first traditional Tamil texts in print, the first Tamil publishers and commercial publishing, all occurred by 1840; these events in print history were not without political significance, as explained in Chapter 3. In a comprehensive essay, David Washbrook has pointed out that the 1840s represent the 'Big Divide' in the Tamil country during the century; later political, social and cultural developments, he points out, can only be understood against the backdrop of those earlier events.[13]

By focusing on the early period between 1800 and 1840, and especially on its little-known history of printing, I hope this book will add depth to our understanding of that watershed decade in the colonial century. This book, finally, does not carry on to the turn of the next century, but concludes in the 1880s, with the final episode in the history of printed folklore in the nineteenth century—its invocation in nationalist discourse.

Print, folklore, colonialism and nationalism

With these aims and limitations, this study of literary history in Madras draws on research in the fields of print culture and folklore, and their place in nineteenth-century colonialism and nationalism in India. The study of print came to prominence with Elizabeth Eisenstein's monumental two volumes in 1979; although she largely followed the French historians of the book in her pursuit of objective consequences of the 'mechanick art', Eisenstein's work advanced the French thesis of cultural change with fewer statistics and in bolder terms. Her modest conclusion, after six hundred pages, that print contributed to the Protestant Reformation, leaves little to dispute, but her claim that '[a] persuasive case can be made for ... viewing the advent of printing as inaugurating a new cultural era in the history of Western man' provoked a minor counter-revolution.[14] The mechanistic approach, with its emphasis on the machinery and technology of print, has since been challenged and revised by a series of studies that emphasise the social and cultural uses of books.

Cultural and literary historians, in particular, have taken the lead in charting this new interpretative framework. Natalie Z. Davis's and Roger Chartier's analyses of early modern Europe have drawn attention to the multiple, often conflicting, uses of print, by readers, publishers and booksellers; in this new approach, books are cultural objects, and readers are 'textual communities' and 'consumers of popular culture'.[15] This shift toward the uses of print has also undermined its supposed polarisation with orality; when viewed as a means of communication, it is clear that print does not exist in isolation, but interacts with other

media, including oral traditions and writing. In addition to important studies on the medieval period, we have several that demonstrate this commingling in early modern Europe.[16] Wlad Godzich's essay on popular Spanish literature in the sixteenth century, for example, describes a transitional stage of 'auditive' literature, which retains some features of oral literature (the marvellous) while also exhibiting new elements resulting from printing (a fragmented audience).[17] A similar hybridity of orality and print in early modern England has been described by Adam Fox;[18] and another monograph has argued that this interaction was manifest in chapbooks and other street genres of the same period.[19] This admixture of orality, writing and print in Europe has also been given comparative breadth and contextual depth by Ruth Finnegan's detailed survey of oral performances across the world.[20] To risk a generalisation about this diverse, second wave of research, printing as cold, metallic machine has been replaced by the book as malleable, cultural object.

Even fixity and standardisation, the defining features of print culture in earlier scholarship, are no longer stable. In his recent book on printing in seventeenth-century London, Adrian Johns makes a persuasive case that, at least in the world of scientific knowledge, early printed books and their authors struggled to gain authority; the certainty and trust that we now grant to books, he argues, is the end result of a long battle against suspicions about the vagaries of the printed word.[21] Fixity and authenticity, Johns argues, were never intrinsic to print. Similarly, the fixity and standardisation underpinning Benedict Anderson's argument linking print and nationalism have been challenged by many, including several writing on South Asia;[22] but the criticism which is most relevant to the argument in this book is presented by Kathy Trumpener in her study of bardic nationalism in early modern Britain. Contrary to Anderson's thesis that nationalism was a modernist project, created in part by print capitalism, especially by newspapers, Trumpener points out that Celtic nationalist movements were anti-modern, that they were in opposition to rather than derivative of modernisation.[23] I will return to this argument in Chapter 5, which describes the relation between folklore and nationalist discourse in India; Trumpener's study,

and Bendix's on the contradictions of 'authentic' folklore (discussed above), are major sources for my understanding of the ambivalence toward folklore in colonial south India.

Revised and reduced by these counter-arguments, the change produced by print appears more innovation than revolution. It was an innovation of undeniable consequence, as this book will confirm, but my assessment of its effects is tempered by two realisations. First, whenever we speak of impacts, it is important to remember, as already noted, that print did not so much produce new books as more old books; the bestsellers of the fifteenth century were the old favourites: the *Golden Legend*, the tales of Reynard, Erasmus' *Adagia* (a collection of proverbs), Caxton's *Aesop* and so forth. Similarly, the books introduced to India by the Portuguese in the next century were catechisms, confessionaries, and the lives of the Saints; and the same is true of the first books printed by the Protestants in the eighteenth century (bibles, and parts of the bible). True, all these early printed books were 'new' to India, many in translation, but that novelty was the result of colonialism not print. New grammars and dictionaries were printed, beginning with de Proenca's dictionary of 1679, but even their novelty was not created by print, since similar texts had been written and transmitted before print. And yet all these early printed books, both old and new texts, were significant in that their uses changed local attitudes toward language and literature.

This shift was a result not just of print but of the new literary practices that accompanied it. This is the second realisation that guides my assessment of the effects of print: they must be seen in a broad historical perspective, as allied to certain practices which led to the emergence of a new literary culture in Tamil after the sixteenth century. Printing, which was brought to the west coast in 1556 and produced the first book in Tamil (or any Indian language) in 1577, operated in concert with this set of literary practices—translation, interlingual dictionaries and grammars, script reform and modern, discursive prose—which were either set in train or deeply stimulated by the encounter with Europeans and European languages. As explained in Chapter 2, when these literary practices took root over the next three centuries, especially in the

eighteenth century, south Indians began to entertain new ideas about language and language use; whether translation or prose or dictionaries, these practices continually raised the question of 'which Tamil to use'.[24] Though not a new question in multilingual south India, it was now asked in the new context of linguistic translation and missionary purpose. Seen thus from the outside, from the Europeans' perspective, Tamil language and literature looked different from the speech and poetry so familiar from the inside.

Heeding these two realisations, that print did not create new texts and that it worked in alliance with other practices, I will not argue that print ushered in a new cultural or literary era in colonial south India. There were, as far as I can tell, no large-scale conceptual shifts, no new mentalities, no 'logic of print'. Perhaps, as others have claimed for printing in Europe, it may have encouraged a shift from memorisation to reference, especially through alphabetisation, which although not new in south India was stimulated by printing.[25] But I do not believe that print per se 'caused' anything; rather it enabled change, allowing certain texts and forms of information to spread more quickly and widely (though not more cheaply) than was previously possible by speech or writing. From its beginnings in the sixteenth century, and together with translation and other literary practices, print did stimulate new ideas about language and literature; and later, in the nineteenth century, printed books and journalism helped to educate, to inform and to express public opinion. Most important for this book, print enabled new uses of folklore, in schools and in nationalist debates.

The field of print studies, like the technology itself, has travelled from its European birthplace to India. The research on print in south Asia has now reached a critical mass—monographs, essays and unpublished dissertations that explore some aspect of the history of printing, printed books and journalism in India. Among the most valuable of these are studies that chart the early history of printing in India; while they lack a sociological perspective, they nevertheless provide data essential to any analysis.[26] A wider interpretative framework is employed by a second group of studies that consider print as an influential factor in explicating literary history in the nineteenth century, although only

one or two of these actually place print at the centre of the analysis.[27] A third type of study, and the most numerous, examines the role of print, usually its effects on Indian languages and literature, within an historiographical investigation of colonialism.[28]

Many of these studies of colonialism have added detail and depth to the history of print in the nineteenth century; my own analysis draws, for instance, on Naregal's discussion of bilingualism in Marathi and on Bhattacharya's discussion of the socialisation of language in Bengali, and on their descriptions of the split between 'high and low' printed literature in those languages.[29] A particularly sophisticated study, combining statistical with sociological analyses, plus a recognition of the ambivalence of popular literature, is Tapti Roy's 1995 essay on late nineteenth-century Bengal. If there is a limitation to these historiographical studies, however, it is that they tend to lean heavily on the fixity and standardisation theses, as derived from Eisenstein and Anderson and then recast in the colonial context by Bernard Cohn's essay on language and control.[30] As a result, the principal significance of print which emerges from these studies is its role in standardising orthography and spelling, in conferring status on one linguistic register over others, and in establishing a literary canon. While print did contribute to the fixity and standardisation of Indian languages and literatures, this analysis tends to invest it with more causality than it deserves and to reduce print to an instrument of power, wielded by the state and Indian elites.

It is also true that standardisation and fixity, the supposed consequences of this print-led colonisation of language and literature, can have the opposite effect and lead to democratisation—as Anderson himself pointed out. This democratising potential of print has been emphasised in a few studies on India which imply a parallel between the role of print in the dissolution of a unified Latin culture and the rise of vernacular languages in Europe, on the one hand, and the role of print in the emergence of regional languages in India, on the other.[31] Print is credited with, for example, undermining traditional authority figures in Indian Islam as well as enabling lower-middle-class Bengalis to contest elite culture.[32]

Despite its shortcomings, this scholarship has taught us a good deal about print in India; even if it did not by itself standardise languages or fix canons or maintain colonial domination, the rise of print must be included in any attempt to explain cultural change in the nineteenth century. What is beyond dispute is that print increased literacy, multiplied the copies and widened the distribution of traditional texts; it reached new audiences with new types of information and encouraged new literary forms. And through all these innovations, print facilitated public debate on everything from vernacular education to child marriage and nationalism.

From the very beginning of the century, print also affected the fortunes of folklore, as both living tradition and historical construction. Studies tracing the effects of printed folktales in early modern Europe have presented sophisticated analyses of their literary reception and pedagogical use. Catherine Velay-Vallantin, for instance, has argued that Perrault's printed tales represented a 'new orality', an afterlife for oral tales that were read on the page but also discussed in conversation.[33] One of those pedagogical ends, according to Jack Zipes, was the socialisation of the middle classes in the nineteenth century; the new print life of the Grimms' tales, he claims, converted an oral peasant storytelling for adults into a written bourgeois literature for children.[34]

A comprehensive analysis of print and folklore in India has not yet been published. In fact, except as that which print apparently displaced, folklore is virtually absent from studies of print in India. The scenario of displacement, in which native knowledge falls before the advance of European technology, appears regularly in the literature, either in summary statements that print 'outflanked the oral, person to person, systems' or that 'recitation at religious festivals, *kirtan* singing and *yatra* plays, lost popularity to the printed book'.[35] A more dramatic picture is drawn for Tamil:

Unlike in most western societies, the dimension of primary (genuine) orality is still alive on various levels in India ... However, in Tamil culture, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a decisive break with this tradition: the introduction of large-scale printing and of periodical journalism; the decline and demise of the village 'veranda schools' ...; the first printed editions

of classical literary heritage until then taught and explained in oral transmission; the early chapbooks fixing in print folk-ballads, folk-plays, folk-narratives, etc. and last, but not least, the origin and development of indigenous, standardised 'high fiction' appearing in print.[36]

This kind of pronouncement is simplistic in its mechanistic assumption, in its failure to consider the social uses of print and in its lack of historical perspective. Claiming once again an incompatibility between orality and print, this thinking is a colonial derivative of the false dichotomy. The counter-argument, the commingling thesis, described above as a response to the proposition of a print revolution in early modern Europe, has been put forward in India by only a few writers, and only with reference to the relations between orality and writing. A.K. Ramanujan, for example, often spoke about the oral and written 'streams' of Indian literature; and V. Narayana Rao has coined the term 'oral-literate' to describe pundits, poets and other intellectuals who operate within a culture that is both orally transmitted and literate at the same time. To extend these ideas to the interaction between orality and print, this book will describe printed folklore.

If folklore is virtually absent from studies of print in India, it does appear in a handful, but only a handful, of essays that place it within the context of nineteenth-century colonialism and nationalism.[37] The key argument to emerge, however, is similar to that found in historiographical studies of print: the science and practice of folklore were extensions of the colonial project, particularly the construction of Oriental knowledge.[38] There is ample evidence, some provided by this research, to demonstrate that folklore, like anthropology in India, was a colonial enterprise. The Presidential speech to the Folklore Society in London in 1900, for example, advocated the 'empire theory' of folklore, according to which an awareness of native lore was helpful to an efficient administration of the colonies; and three years later, the Linguistic Survey of India was established with Sir George Grierson, a veteran folklorist-administrator, in charge.[39] A small but telling fact is that there was no word for 'folklore' in any Indian language, until the neologisms of the twentieth century.[40] However, I believe that this analysis of folklore as a colonial institution is incomplete in two aspects: it

is limited to the second half of the nineteenth century, and it is based on the activities of a few, well-known British folklorist-civil servants of that period.

This book, while not providing a comprehensive survey, will attempt a more complex explanation of folklore in the nineteenth century, if only in Madras. First, it will add historical depth by discussing the history of Tamil folk traditions and their use by Europeans before 1850; folktales, in particular, were collected, written down and discussed by missionaries in the eighteenth century and then in the early nineteenth century by British civil servants, who also translated and printed them. Although most of the early examples of printed folklore originated at the College of Fort St George in Madras, their production and later uses represent more than a colonial enterprise; indeed, at times their extreme popularity among Indians was perceived as a threat to government. Second, the history of folklore in colonial India will be enriched by including the activities of Indians, who are often left out of postcolonial analysis.[41] Many Indians, both intellectuals and government servants, participated in the collection, preparation, publication and interpretation of folklore, and not simply as assistants to their British supervisors; in the second half of the century some of them wrote about folklore, if not as a counter-weight to colonialism, then at least as an expression of a pre-colonial culture. The folkloristic pursuits of Rabindranath Tagore are relatively well known, but there are others, including Natesa Sastri, the first true Indian folklorist, whose story is told in this book.

Lastly, this book will complicate the place of folklore in nineteenth-century India by discussing its relation to nationalism. Although the historical links between folklore and nationalist movements in Europe are well researched, no similar study has yet appeared for India; even the studies of folklore in the nineteenth century, cited above, empha-sise it as colonial policy and not as a response to colonialism. This limited analysis of folklore in the historiography of colonial India is curious since by common consent the central dynamic of the nine-teenth century was a confrontation between tradition and modernity; and folklore, by any measure, is a key element of tradition. The pro-

cesses by which Indian tradition was reshaped by modernising and anti-colonial movements—the preservation of texts, classicisation of history, archaisation of language and sanitising of culture—are now well known. We know that printed books, newsprint and journals helped to redefine and disseminate these pre-colonial cultural forms, a process which underpinned what Vasudha Dalmia has called the 'nationalisation of tradition' and David Washbrook 'the traditional-ization of Indian society'.[42] The historical depth of this reinterpretation of tradition has also been described by Christopher Bayly in an essay on eighteenth-century forms of 'patriotism', which were then recast by nationalist movements in the late nineteenth century.[43]

This book draws out the implications of these studies by arguing that folklore was an important source for nationalist thinking in India. After considering three major examples of folklore and nation-building in Europe, I will suggest that a similar though not identical process was at work in south India. In developing this argument of folklore and the nation, I will describe an intellectual interaction in which European concepts of folklore and the nation influenced British and Tamil scholars in Madras; ideas of a lost antiquity and purity, buried under layers of foreign cultural domination, were inflected through nationalist and Dravidian sensibilities in the 1870s and 1880s in Madras. These Tamil constructions of folklore and the nation were expressed in the language of loss, mixing claims of buried history with forgotten texts and disappearing traditions. I will describe two of these formulations, one which constructed a folk identity for a suppressed Dravidian culture and another which invoked the vanishing village as an image of personal and cultural loss.

In the end, however, as the nationalist movements progressed to-ward the new century, folklore did not supply the means for imagining the nation. I believe that the reason for this lay in the ambivalence of tradition, the ambiguity with which folklore was approached in the nineteenth century. Drawing largely on Bengali material, Partha Chatterjee has shown that nationalist thinking initially carved out a domestic space, in novels, dramas and the family; thus insulated from the colonial state, this internal sphere appropriated and then sanitised

popular culture as a seed-bed for nationalism.[44] This argument is valu-
able in identifying the internal, protected spaces from which early
nationalist thinking emerged, but I would like to extend and revise it
here. First, the popular culture appropriated by nationalist thinking, in
both Madras and Calcutta, included a large chunk of folklore, which
has its own forms and should be distinguished from popular culture
(which includes mass-produced items such as journalism, drama scripts,
poster art, etc.). Second, the domesticity of folklore is more compli-
cated: folklore was not confined to the domestic sphere but appeared
in publications and was reviewed in the press; once in the public sphere,
however, the perception of folklore as part of the interior world of
indigenous culture generated ambivalence towards it. Folktales and songs
and proverbs belonged to the inner domain which only a native, it
was claimed, could understand; but in the end it was found to be too
native, too redolent of backward traditions, to be capable of assuming
the public mantle of a political nationalism. The very source of folklore's
pull on the popular imagination—its familiarity and personal touch—
rendered it incapable of leading a public, political movement. Still,
folklore never completely left the nationalist stage, and later forms
of nationalism in the twentieth century continued to draw upon the
emotive power of lost traditions.

This connection between folklore and the nation is the last episode
in the history of printed folklore in colonial south India to be told in
this book. Despite its inglorious end, the incompatibility between native
knowledge and public politics recalls that other, apparent discrepancy
between oral traditions and print noted at the beginning of this
Introduction. And just as printed folklore reveals that dichotomy as
false, the inseparability of tradition and modernity explains the tenuous,
yet never completely severed link between folklore and the nation.

Before print

The main narrative of this book begins, in the next chapter, with the
introduction of print to India in the mid-sixteenth century; by then,
however, Tamil literary culture was already more than fifteen hundred

years old. For that reason, I present here a brief overview of the history of oral traditions and writing in Tamil before print. From its long textual record, beginning with the ancient poems and grammars to early modern texts, it appears that Tamil literature was always characterised by a fluid interaction between sophisticated literary technique, oral tradition and writing. The literary talent is evident in the texts themselves, and the history of writing can be pieced together from surviving examples, but our knowledge of oral genres is uncertain and limited.

Before print came to India in 1556, indeed before the first printed folklore of the early nineteenth century, what we know of oral traditions in south India is based on literary inference and epigraphical guesswork. Literary references, as far back as the ancient Tamil poems two thousand years ago, suggest that the major traditions of dance-drama (*natakam*), song (*pattu*) and narrative (*katai*) are very old. The *Cilappatikaram*, for example, an epic poem composed around AD 500, includes several songs, some of which accompany games or dances, that appear to be taken directly from folk tradition; one section of the epic contains a list of songs and dances, but not all can be identified with known folk traditions.[45] On the other hand, the narrative told in this early epic is still alive today in various oral traditions. (In this narrative, prince Kovalan deserts his wife, Kannaki, for a courtesan and eventually is murdered by a king who wrongly believes he has stolen the queen's anklet; faithful Kannaki confronts the king with the evidence to prove his innocence, tears off her breast in rage and flings it on the city of Madurai, which then goes up in flames, after which she becomes a goddess, worshipped by hill people.) Early Tamil poetry also contains references to the Rama story and to tales in the *Pancatantra*; and both were illustrated in sculptural reliefs on south Indian temples as early as the seventh century AD. Folk songs, especially lullabies, have appeared in, and sometimes have inspired, literary compositions right from the ancient epic to the poetry of Subramania Bharati (1882–1921), the 'father' of modern Tamil poetry. Although this literary and epigraphical record is evidence of the popularity of certain folk genres, it cannot tell us much about their historical development, and it supplies little or no information about oral narrative genres, such as the folktale, which is the focus in this book.

In the early modern period, the historical record thickens with dat-
able texts, official documents and the occasional traveller's report. A
letter written in the mid-seventeenth century by an Italian traveller in
the Deccan, for instance, appears to describe a shadow puppet play,
but again it is not conclusive.[46] The literary history of this period, the
Nayaka period, roughly from AD 1600 to 1800, has been gradually
assembled over the past decade by the collaborative research of Sanjay
Subrahmanyam, David Shulman and Velcheru Narayana Rao, and the
solo efforts of Indira Peterson.[47] One conclusion to emerge from their
research is that the break-up of the Vijayanagar empire in the mid-
sixteenth century led to a new literary and historiographical sensibility
and thus to a remarkable number of new or reconstituted genres and
performing arts.

Eighteenth-century literary culture in Tamil, in particular, was
marked by growing cultural influences from the Maratha Deccan, from
the Telugu and Muslim north, and from the European-controlled coasts.
The convergence of these influences in the Tamil heartland created an
unprecedented explosion of literary energy; politically, too, it was a
tumultuous time, with armies and new technologies of war criss-crossing
the countryside. Amid this volatility, poets and pundits and kings
composed new kinds of dance-dramas, songs, poetry, mythology and
ballads, in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Urdu and Marathi; and explored new
forms of historical writing in Persian and Telugu (and to a lesser extent
in Tamil). Most of this literature was composed under the patronage
of regional courts, some of which were small and ruled by local Tamil
or Telugu warrior elites; but the major courts at Tanjore and Madurai
were ruled by relative newcomers, the Maratha and Telugu elites who
had arrived after the fall of the Vijayanagar empire.

The Maratha court at Tanjore (1675–1855), capital of the powerful
Chola dynasty that had promoted Tamil literature almost a thousand
years earlier, was at the centre of this expanding literary culture. During
the eighteenth century, the court at Tanjore developed several new
performing arts forms: *yaksagana*, *Bhagavata Mela*, *kathakalaksepam*,
harikatha, Carnatic music, and probably the shadow puppet play, which
narrated the Rama story. It was also at Tanjore that Arunachala Kavirayar

performed his extremely popular *Rama Natakam* and that Tyagaraja first sang the songs that even now are the staple of Carnatic singing. More than patrons, some Maratha rajas themselves wrote complex dramas and poems in Telugu, Sanskrit and infrequently in Tamil. The creativity of the Maratha court extended to printed folklore: in the first years of the nineteenth century, Serfoji II printed a Marathi version of Aesop's tales.[48] However, and symptomatic of a shift in Tamil literary culture described in the next chapter, a few years later a pundit from the Tanjore court, Sivakoluntu Desikar, was appointed pundit at the College of Fort St George in Madras.

Patronised by courts and composed by named poets, most of the new literature I have described above is not truly folk; but given the new performance contexts and narrative content of many of the compositions we might call it 'popular'. The *nontinatakam* and *kuravanci*, in particular, borrowed characters and themes from folk tradition, such as courtesans and cripples, eroticism and mutilation, which were mostly muted or philosophised in earlier Tamil literature.[49] Still, we know virtually nothing about the traditions from which this new courtly literature borrowed. One assumes that folk traditions of song, dance-drama and narrative pre-date the earliest written and printed Tamil texts, but we have no clear idea of their content or cultural status. Folktales, the genre discussed in this book, might well have been told for many centuries in much the same way as they are told today, all over Tamil Nadu. Before printed books of folktales first appeared in the early nineteenth century, written manuscripts surely influenced oral storytelling, but to say more would be conjecture.[50] In the end, we have only a trail of written references with which to reconstruct a history of oral traditions in Tamil before print.

In fact, although we know that oral traditions must have pre-dated writing in Tamil, it is difficult to disentangle orality from the history of writing in south India. The very earliest Tamil text bears clear evidence of a sophisticated writing system: the *Tolkappiyam*, a grammar composed around the turn of the Christian era, contains many references to 'letters' and to orthographic conventions. Writing, in the form of the Brahmi script, was probably first brought to south India by Jains and Buddhists

during Asoka's reign in the third century before Christ; possibly as early as AD 300, and certainly by AD 500, a distinct Tamil Brahmi script, adapted to Dravidian phonology, emerged and slowly evolved into modern written Tamil.[51] By AD 300 a considerable corpus of sophisticated poetry had also been composed in Tamil; the so-called 'Sangam corpus', more than two thousand poems, some as long as four or five hundred lines, others as short as four or five lines, was composed by several hundred named poets. But were these sharp-eyed, lapidary poems, so brilliantly captured by A.K. Ramanujan's translations, composed orally or by writing? Specialists have weighed in on both sides, occasionally even switching sides, of what appears to be an insoluble question.[52] One can point, for instance, to the recurrence of formulaic phrases as evidence of oral composition, but more telling is the absence of periodic enjambment, the break between phrases, which is so essential to extemporised composition. Many of the poems are presented as if spoken or sung by bards, while, on the other hand, many give prominence to the role of the poet-scholar (*pulavar*). Another problem is that we know the poems only in the form they received after the processes of editing and anthologising in the eighth century AD. Given the existence of writing in the early centuries and the concision of the Sangam poems, I think we can agree with George Hart that they were written down at some point.[53] It is difficult to accept Kamil Zvelebil's tautological assertion that, because of their 'undoubtedly oral nature', the early Tamil poems were not written down in any form.[54]

It is equally clear, however, that these Sangam poems were intended to be sung, and not read, and that the poets were almost certainly singers or had close contact with singers. Everything we know about Tamil literary production in the present and recent past demonstrates an intricate interaction between oral performance and literary text, between speech, however much extemporised or memorised, and writing. Written texts are sometimes the written-down products of oral composition, sometimes they are 'scripts' for oral performance, and sometimes they are a passive presence that confers legitimacy on a performance. Whatever the precise interaction between orality and writing that lies behind these ancient poems, there was never a 'primary oral culture'

in Tamil; we may speak of a time before print, but, unless we wish to entertain theories about the pre-historical megalithic period, we cannot speak of a time before writing.

Once we accept that writing played a role in the composition and preservation of these ancient poems, the next question is, 'what materials were used to write them'? If writing has remained a permanent feature of Tamil literary culture, it has also undergone major changes. Most of the earliest inscriptions in the Tamil country, those of the Asokan period, were chiselled into stone above or inside caves where Jain or Buddhist ascetics lived during retreats; these early examples of writing record the names of places and kings, donors and monks, such as: 'The sleeping place [=cave] given by Atiyan Netuman Anci, the Satiyaputa'.[55] The succeeding group of inscriptions, from the third century AD, add references to land purchases and tax systems. By the medieval period, long and complicated texts, praising donors for building temples, granting tax-free lands and performing charitable actions, were inscribed on stone, and occasionally on copper plates; these texts were composed by pundits or poets but written by artisans. Memorial stones to fallen heroes, killed while fighting cattle raiders, for instance, were also erected with inscriptions. Bark, cloth (often silk), iron, clay, silver, bronze, gold and even ivory were used for writing; one famous example is the treaty between the Zamorin of Calicut and the Dutch East India Company engraved on a rolled-up strip of gold in 1691.[56] The perishable materials, such as bark, cloth and later paper, however, were used more commonly in north India than in the south.

Most early Tamil writing, excluding stone inscriptions, was probably on palm leaves; this was the most common medium for writing in south India right until the end of the nineteenth century; some inscribed copper plates in south India, and later even printed books, were shaped like palm leaves.[57] But this method of writing also underwent major innovations. In both north and south India the talipot palm (*Corypha umbraculifera*), with its wide fan-shaped leaves, was a popular medium for writing for many centuries; the earliest surviving south Indian manuscript, a Jain text of AD 1112, was written on talipot palm leaves.[58] In the sixteenth century (a curious coincidence with the introduction

of print), however, a change took place: another tree, the sturdier palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*) was introduced to India, apparently from east Africa. Because it was able to survive the cold winters in north India, and perhaps because it provides not only writing materials but also fruit and sap (which can be fermented to make arrack or toddy), this tree soon replaced the talipot. By about AD 1500 it was cultivated all over south India, but especially on coastal regions, and soon manuscripts were being written on its leaves. In north India, the demise of the talipot was concurrent with the introduction of another foreign writing material. Paper came to north India some time in the thirteenth century, as part of a general Persian–Turkish cultural expansion; within two hundred years, it had replaced the talipot palm as the common means for writing in west and north India, although in eastern India the talipot continued until the seventeenth century and in Bihar until the eighteenth century.[59]

In south India, however, after 1600, everything from religious texts to royal proclamations, from tax records to pharmacopoeia, was written on the leaves of the female palmyra (*pana maram*). The leaves of this tree, which is also an important source of jaggery and arrack (*kallu*), are small, narrow and fibrous, with serrated edges. Unlike the larger and more flexible talipot palm leaves, which were usually written on using pen and ink, the tough palmyra required another method altogether. The process of preparing the leaves, as I observed it in the late 1970s, began with the selection of the leaves to be cut from the trees; once cut, the leaves were dried in the sun for a few days and then trimmed to the appropriate size, somewhere between fourteen to twenty inches long and one to two inches wide. Next, both sides of the leaves were rubbed back and forth on the bottom of the foot to create smooth surfaces; and finally a hole was pierced in the centre of each leaf or, in the case of long leaves, a hole was bored near each end. Writing was done with an iron stylus (*eluttani*), held vertically in the right hand and pushed from behind by the thumb of the left hand. When the writing was finished, the incised letters were blackened with charcoal paste or oil to make them easier to read; mistakes were easily corrected by erasing them with a small knife and writing over them. In order to fit as many letters as possible onto the small leaves, a special Tamil shorthand, which elided two letters into one, was employed.

In the Tamil country, writing on palm leaves with an iron stylus was common but, given low levels of literacy, never widespread.[60] Throughout the course of the nineteenth century, with the development of public education, more and more people learnt to write with slate and chalk, and later with paper and pen; as late as the 1890s, however, palm leaves were still used in village schools and converts to Christianity wrote biblical lectures on palm leaves with an iron stylus. By the early twentieth century the traditional practice had all but disappeared, although palm-leaf manuscripts survived, and in great numbers. During the nineteenth century they were the object of a furious and competitive search by pundits anxious to put traditional Tamil texts into print. Only in the more conservative southern Tamil districts, and only for a specific purpose, did writing with a stylus on palm leaves continue into the early twentieth century; in the bow song (*vil pattu*) tradition, stories sung during temple festivals were copied and recopied on palm leaves until about the late 1950s. By the 1970s, when I studied this singing tradition, only one man still wrote on palm leaf.

Arumukam Perumal Nadar's cloth bag

A.K. Arumukam Perumal Nadar was born in 1924 in the village of Ageestisvaram, five miles from the southern tip of India at Kanyakumari. He was not a singer (he had a terrible voice) but a *pulavar*, a poet-scholar, who composed bow songs, the long narrative songs which are sung during temple festivals; he also wrote them, and other narratives as well, carefully etching the letters with an iron stylus into newly prepared palmyra leaves. He once wrote for me (with paper and pen) the titles of the fifty-six texts that he possessed either in palm leaf, paper or print. His earliest palm-leaf manuscript was dated in the late seventeenth century and several had dates in the eighteenth century, although the stories they told had been composed and sung long before that. These rare manuscripts were valuable because they were believed to be the most authentic versions of the legends sung at the temples; not just stories, these are local histories, often of recently deceased family or caste members, sung to induce spirit possession and to request the deity, through the possessed medium, to grant favours and offer advice.

Only a true account of these local family histories, it is said, will invoke the spirits, and so the palm-leaf manuscripts are often placed near the singers as a legitimising presence, or sometimes read by them like a script.

Bow songs, along with other long folk narratives, first appeared in print as chapbooks in the 1860s and have been continually reprinted in the southern districts up to the present day; several bow songs have also acquired a second print-life in semi-scholarly editions. After 1950, the printing of bow songs as popular pamphlets was largely in the hands of Arumukam Perumal Nadar. He had inherited some manuscripts from *pulavars* among his relatives and he bought others; when suitably edited and enhanced by his own invocatory verses, he had them printed, with a woodblock print on the cover, as pamphlets of about fifty or sixty pages. Having financed the printing of one hundred copies, he then hawked them to singers, temple officials and local people with an interest in the ballads. However, unlike the palm leaf manuscripts which authorise performance by their physical presence, these printed texts have not influenced the singing tradition much. Written versions, handcopied from printed pamphlets or palm leaf, also circulate, but primarily to assist singers who want to learn a new song.

Arumukam Perumal Nadar belonged to the Nadar caste, who are the most populous group in villages in this part of south India; but Nadars, even in his lifetime, were considered little better than untouchables by their higher caste neighbours. Arumukam Perumal Nadar came from a family of *pulavars*, some of whom received the support of local rulers, yet even they were subject to restrictions: they were not allowed to wear their *veshti* below the knee or any garment above the waist in the presence of a high-caste man, or to wear sandals, to ride horses or to use a name of god (such as *perumal* [Visnu]) in their own names. Nevertheless, after the Second World War, Arumukam Nadar added 'Perumal' to his name because, as he explained, 'times had begun to change'.

He was a tall man with a proud bearing, an impression enhanced by his erect posture and his long, determined strides. Bare-chested, he wore only a handspun (khadi) cotton *veshti* and a towel (*tuntu*) around his head or thrown over his shoulder. Regardless of the weather, he never

went anywhere without his umbrella, a mass of black canvas with a battered wooden handle as thick as a fist; held in the crook of his arm, it swung freely at his side like a sword as he walked briskly through the streets of the district capital or the lanes in his village. At midday it towered above his head like a huge, black cloud shielding him from the sun during the heat. Whenever he visited my room in the small hotel where I stayed, he carefully placed that weapon on the floor like a heavy club and then sat down.

Before long he would reach for his cloth bag, slung over his bare shoulder. It contained the remainder of his vital possessions: his betel nut paraphernalia, a few copies of his latest bow song pamphlet, handwritten notebooks of other texts, a fountain pen, an iron stylus, and an occasional palm leaf manuscript. After Arumukam Perumal Nadar died in 1984, no one else in that region, or anywhere else in the Tamil country, has carried a similar bag. Looking back, I realise that inside his cloth bag lay the accumulated results of that long history in Tamil of an interaction between oral tradition, writing and print.

Before print, literary culture in the Tamil country was centred in courts and *matts*, where pundits and rajas composed poems, puranas, hagiographies, histories and commentaries in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit and Persian, and to a lesser extent in Marathi and Urdu. Their compositions, guided by established conventions and inspired by new influences, were transmitted by both performance and palm-leaf manuscripts. Beyond these literary centres, there were other traditions in which local *pulavars*, like Arumukam Perumal Nadar, composed songs and wrote on palm leaves. There were also oral traditions less intertwined with writing, from which both these pundits and *pulavars* borrowed. Some genres, such as the folktale, were probably primarily oral, though some oral tales, especially those organised around a frame tale, like the *Pancatantra*, may also have been partially transmitted by palm-leaf manuscript; and a famous literary folktale was composed by the Italian missionary Beschi in the 1740s. What is certain is that Tamil folklore did not enter the historical record as a printed text until the 1820s. By then, however, Tamil had already been in print for two hundred and fifty years.

2

EARLY BOOKS AND NEW LITERARY PRACTICES
1556–1800

Print reached India in the mid-sixteenth century and Tamil books were printed soon after, although commercial printing did not develop until the early nineteenth century; this was also when folklore first entered print. By 1900, however, printed folklore was used in schools, read as cheap pamphlets and published as scholarly books; from the 1870s, folklore, especially folktales in English translation, had entered nationalist discourse. In this chapter, I will argue that to understand these uses of printed folklore in nineteenth-century Madras we must look back to nearly three centuries of interaction between south Indians and Europeans; printing is an obvious legacy of that encounter, but hand in hand with the new technology, the colonial encounter also initiated literary practices that fundamentally changed Tamil literary culture. None of these practices began precisely or exclusively as a result of either colonial contact or printing, but their effects on Tamil literary culture were magnified through the encounter with Europeans and European languages and through their alliance with print.[1]

While the history of these new literary practices is relatively easy to trace, their consequences are not; nevertheless, I think a case can be made that translation, interlingual texts, script reform and discursive prose, stimulated new attitudes toward language and literature among Tamils. Writing about new attitudes toward language in nineteenth-century Europe, Foucault remarked that language gained a 'history'

and became an 'object of knowledge'.[2] In colonial south India, new literary practices, enhanced by print, contributed to a similar but not identical process of the objectification of language. Of course, Tamil had always been an object of knowledge, at least to the pundits who established the early grammars; but the encounter with Europeans, I believe, led to a fundamental shift in the way Tamils viewed their language: no longer only as a patrimony, but as a thing to be measured, known and used. This new perspective emerged at first only among the tiny number of Tamils who worked with Europeans, but eventually this understanding, implicit in public instruction and study of the language, became widespread. The interaction between Tamils and Europeans, Jesuit missionaries in the first instance, then Lutherans and other Protestants, and finally British (and French) civil servants and scholars, initiated a range of cross-linguistic activities: Tamils taught Tamil to outsiders; they learnt European languages from Europeans; Tamils translated European languages into Tamil and Tamil into European languages; and Europeans learnt, taught and translated into and, though less frequently, from Tamil.

As a result of all this activity, stretching over three centuries, from 1550 to 1850, and supported by dozens of interlingual grammars and more than fifty interlingual dictionaries, Tamil became a formal field of academic study, an object of knowledge, and eventually acquired a longer literary history. This linguistic exchange also produced a shift of perspective: if to speak a language is to inhabit a culture, then to teach a language is to move outside a culture; to translate your mother tongue is to conceive for it a purpose beyond your own use. With the colonial encounter, I believe that Tamils began to see their language from the outside, from the vantage point of a foreigner; and viewed from that perspective, it could be considered a thing to be acquired, manipulated and reformed. More important, language was not only malleable, it was itself a tool for ideological and social change.

One measure of the impact of Europeans and European languages on Tamil is to consider the very different interaction between Tamil and other Indian languages. I am not here concerned with the historical influence of Indian languages on Tamil on the morphological or

lexical levels, but rather with the nature of that interaction and its consequences for perceptions of language. The deep and extensive influence of Sanskrit and Prakrit, for instance, is well known, but, as E. Annamalai has pointed out, this long contact did not produce any bilingual dictionaries, say Tamil–Sanskrit or Prakrit–Tamil.[3] The only exception to this might be the medieval glossaries which often used Sanskrit to explicate the 'hard words' in the *manipravala* Vaisnava commentaries.[4] Nor were Tamil grammars written in Sanskrit or Pali or Prakrit by the proponents of Brahminism, Buddhism and Jainism when they settled in the Tamil country. The arrival of the Portuguese, on the other hand, generated both the first interlingual dictionary and the first interlingual grammar of an Indian language, both by Henriques and both lost, at least until recently; a manuscript, believed to be Henriques's grammar, titled *Sumario de Arte Malauar*, was found in Lisbon in 1954 and published in 1982.[5] Other such interlingual texts followed, beginning with de Proença's Tamil–Portuguese dictionary in the late seventeenth century and many more in the eighteenth century, most famously C.G. Beschi's five dictionaries and two grammars. These first interlingual texts marked a significant shift in language use: whereas the monolingual Tamil dictionaries and grammars were conceived as tools for composition, the bi- or trilingual texts prepared by Europeans were used for instruction.[6]

This absence of interlingual texts is related to another dimension of pre-colonial contact between Tamil and other Indian languages: there were virtually no translations, in the sense of a word-for-word rendering from one language to another. Instead, the interaction between Tamil and Sanskrit, in particular, was characterised by assimilation, whereby foreign words were absorbed only if they were capable of being pronounced in Tamil and written in Tamil script. Thus only Sanskrit words with sounds comparable to those in Tamil were transliterated into Tamil, at least into written Tamil, often with some Tamilising suffix (*tevan* for *deva*, for instance).[7] Other, unassimilatable words were kept out of written Tamil until about AD 1500. There were, of course, loan translations (*dharma-putra* became *aravanmakan*), and some new words were coined for Sanskrit words with sounds not available in Tamil ('Sanskrit' was known as *vatamoli*, the 'northern language').

This is not to say that ancient and medieval south India was not multilingual, but only that the multilingualism was characterised by assimilation not translation. The extensive linguistic and grammatical interpenetration in this early period is described in Anne Monius's excellent study of Tamil Buddhist texts, especially the *Viracoliyam* (c. AD 1000) which codified the rules for Tamilising Sanskrit words; this sometimes wholesale incorporation of Sanskrit concepts and categories into Tamil only illustrates the assimilation model that predominated until the arrival of Europeans.[8] As Monius shows, this early text was part of a project for transforming Tamil from a regional language into a translocal one; I will argue that the colonial encounter on the other hand, initiated a translation project that contributed to the marginalisation of Tamil in the nineteenth century.

After about AD 1500, translations from Sanskrit did appear and unassimilated words began to flood literary Tamil; eventually a hybrid idiom (*manipravalam),* mixing Sanskrit and Tamil words, and Sanskrit terms with Tamil inflections, was devised primarily for use among Vaisnavas.[9] A special, hybrid script (*grantha*) was also developed in order to write Sanskrit letters. Despite these medieval hybrids, and although many south Indian pundits were literate in both languages, the remarkable fact is that very few Sanskrit texts entered Tamil through translation prior to AD 1500. One has to stretch hard to find examples of even loose translations: the Tamil *Kurmapuranam* resembles one Sanskrit version, and *Tantiyalankaram* is close to the Sanskrit text, but the historical relation between these sets of texts is far from certain.[10] Kampan did not translate Valmiki; he rewrote the epic in Tamil. Nor are the Tamil *Kantapuranam* and *Bhagavatam* translations of their Sanskrit sources; they are transformations and adaptations, and the changes are substantial. The 'northern tongue' was largely experienced through its sacred texts in a separate language, and assimilated rather than translated.

During the early modern period (1600–1800), Telugu and Marathi were also prominent as court languages in the Tamil country, but, like Sanskrit, neither language was extensively translated into Tamil. Nevertheless, the assimilation that once characterised Tamil interaction with other Indian languages gave way to greater interlingual practices during

this period, especially the eighteenth century, when new literary practices, detailed in this chapter, were already gaining ground. As Indira Peterson has shown, the literature produced at the Maratha court at Tanjore is characterised by a striking degree of multilingualism; many texts were self-consciously written in various and playful combinations of Telugu, Sanskrit, Tamil, Marathi, and occasionally Hindustani. This textual polyglossia, in Peterson's analysis, reveals a movement from viewing language as rooted in one culture to seeing language as detachable.[11] In other words, language had become a thing, and the silent assimilation of the early centuries was overturned in the volatile rearrangement of politics and social relations that shook up the Tamil country during the eighteenth century. These alterations in the interaction between languages and perceptions of language owe something, I believe, to the new literary culture that emerged from the encounter with Europeans and their languages.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, interaction between Tamil and European languages was different from that which we have described for Tamil and the Indian languages, at least before the early modern period. It differed in motivation (conversion rather than integration) and means (print rather than oral/written composition), and it was characterised more by translation than by assimilation. One factor militating against assimilation, of course, was that European languages arrived in south India after merely a long journey at sea, without the centuries-long familiarisation with scripts and sounds that accompanied Sanskrit's penetration of Tamil. A few Portuguese words, and later many English words, did enter Tamil, but what distinguishes the contact with these languages from that with Indian languages is the sheer number of foreign texts that appeared in Tamil. Beginning with the first printed Tamil book in 1577, which was a translation of a Portuguese catechism, printed translations into Tamil totalled more than two hundred by the end of the eighteenth century; by the early nineteenth century there was an avalanche, as not just Christian texts but also governmental acts, munsif's regulations and European popular tales appeared in Tamil.

Translation is usually considered as a movement out of India, as an

instrument of Orientalism which misrepresented India to a European audience of readers; but translating into Indian languages, bringing an outsider's perspective within Indian languages, was at least as influential in shaping local attitudes toward language and the literary past. For one thing, these initial translations into Tamil were coterminous with printing in Tamil; interlingual dictionaries and grammars, script reform and discursive prose writing were also first fruits of the new technology, but they matured later, especially in the eighteenth century through the efforts of the Jesuits and the Lutherans. The literary and linguistic practices of these missionaries, their rivalry in print, and Beschi's literary tale, which brought folktales into Tamil literary culture, are central to our story; but first we must consider the earlier history of Tamil printing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Henri Henriques and the sixteenth century

Tamil was not only the first Indian language to appear in print (both in Roman transliteration and in its own script), it was also the first non-European language in print. This historic event arose from a convergence between colonial expansion and local politics, plus the talent and determination of one man, Henri Henriques. Soon after Vasco de Gama's landing in 1498, the Portuguese built a string of forts and trading centres along the west coast of India, first, with the support of their ally the Zamorin, at Cochin in 1503, next at Goa in 1510, then Quilon in 1519 and Cranganur in 1537; meanwhile Franciscan, Augustinian and Dominican missionaries built churches.[12] The Society of Jesus (founded in Rome in 1540), as the intellectual vanguard of the counter-Reformation, built mission stations in those fortified settlements and set up the first printing press at the College of St Paul in Goa in 1556.

But why did Tamil, which was spoken not on the west but on the east coast, become the language of early Indian printing?[13] Why not Konkani, spoken in Goa, or why not Malayalam, spoken in Cochin, Quilon and Cranganur, where the first books were actually printed? The answer is that the Jesuits, led by St Francis Xavier, concentrated their missionary work on the east coast among the Tamil-speaking Parava

fishermen. A decade before Xavier, Franciscan missionaries had reached the Paravas, who lived on the so-called Fishery Coast, stretching north from Kanyakumari up to the Coromandel Coast. As Susan Bayly explains, the mass conversions of the Paravas were in part a result of fierce warfare in the 1530s between the Portuguese and east coast Muslim groups, with whom the Paravas were also in conflict over control of fishing and diving rights. Following the principle of my enemy's enemy is my friend, a delegation of Paravas visited Portuguese authorities at Cochin to seek protection. Seizing the opportunity to extend their control over maritime trade to the east coast, the Portuguese soon dispatched a party of Padres, who reportedly made thousands of converts.[14] Following in their wake, Xavier arrived in Goa in 1542 and then travelled up the east coast as far as Tuticorin and Punnakayal. Before he left for the Far East two years later, Xavier had established a network of Jesuit mission stations and baptised more than 10,000 Paravas (and Malayalam-speaking Mukuvars on the west coast); his zeal and charisma also brought many Jesuit missionaries to what was then a hinterland. Today his legacy is evident in the shrines to St Xavier and the towering spires of Catholic churches in fishing villages along the coast, as well as Portuguese words in local speech.

The most important of those early Jesuits inspired by Xavier was Henri Henriques (1520–1600), a Portuguese Jew, who arrived on the Fishery Coast in 1547 and worked in south India until his death in 1600. During those years, Henriques produced five different books in Tamil script and language, printed at various Jesuit settlements on the west coast; he also compiled a Tamil grammar and a Tamil dictionary, which, though never printed, were widely used by other Europeans. He might just be, as Graham Shaw has suggested, 'the first great European scholar of any Indian language'.[15]

More than twenty years before Henriques's books were printed in India, however, a book using an Indian language was printed in Lisbon. In 1554, Vicente de Nazareth, Jorge Carvalho and Thome da Cruz, three Indians living in Lisbon, translated a Portuguese catechism (*Cartilha*) into Tamil, and then transliterated the Tamil into Roman script; their work was supervised by Fr. Joao Villa de Conde, a Franciscan mission-

ary who had himself travelled widely in south India and Ceylon. The
Cartilha, intended for use by Portuguese missionaries before their
departure for south India, was a bilingual text, with the romanised Tamil
in large red letters above the Portuguese version in black letters.[16] The
Lisbon *Cartilha* soon led to the first printing presses in India. In 1556
Portuguese Jesuits set up a press at the College of St Paul in Goa; oper-
ated by a lay brother named Joao de Bustamente, this press issued a
total of eight books in a variety of languages (Portuguese–Latin, Konkani,
Ethiopic and Tamil); a few years later a commercial press was also set
up in Goa, which printed six more books. With one exception, all these
early books produced from the two presses at Goa between 1556 and
1581 were printed in roman types; that sole exception was Henriques's
Doctrina Christam of 1577, a Tamil translation of a Portuguese cat-
echism, which then became the first book printed in an Indian script
and language.[17]

Early on, Henriques realised that missionary success required books
printed in Indian scripts. During the first years of the Jesuit mission on
the Fishery Coast handwritten copies of a catechism were distributed,
but few Paravas could read or understand the Portuguese. Recognising
the problem almost immediately after landing in India, Henriques
began to compile a Tamil grammar, and after a short two years he had
acquired enough knowledge to complete a first draft of it (*Sumario
de Arte Malauar*).[18] Henriques revised and perfected his text for many
years; he also compiled a Tamil–Portuguese dictionary and planned
translations of a catechism and a confessionary. None of these, neither
the completed manuscripts nor those planned, reached the press. How
could they? No Tamil types had been cast. Indeed, following the example
of the Lisbon *Cartilha* of 1554, Henriques suggested that his Tamil
grammar be printed in Europe with roman types. But the situation
changed in 1574 when the newly appointed Jesuit Visitor to the Province
of India, the historian and diplomat Alessandro Valignano, arrived
in Goa; the following year he convened a conference and instructed
Henriques to prepare a catechism and confessionary in Tamil (and
another, unnamed missionary to prepare the same in Konkani). To
complete this task, Henriques was relieved of his missionary duties on

the east coast and moved to Goa where he began to prepare his texts; there he was assisted by Father Pero Luis, a Tamil Brahmin, who had entered the Jesuit order in 1562, aged thirty. The stage was finally set when Tamil types were cast in Goa by Joao Goncalves, with assistance from Luis.

In 1577 the first of Henriques's five books was printed in Goa: *Doctrina Christam, Tampiran Vanakkam* ('Worship of the Lord') possibly a revision of St Xavier's earlier rewriting (1542) and then imperfect Tamil translation (1544) of a Portuguese catechism by Joam de Barros printed in Lisbon in 1539.[19] This 1577 text was, as noted earlier, not only the first book printed with Indian types but the first with non-roman metallic types anywhere in the world; the first such books in Chinese and Japanese appeared more than a decade later, while the first book in another Indian script (Sinhala) did not appear until 1737.[20] The casting of Konkani types had begun in the sixteenth century but was never completed; hence the practice (even today) of printing Konkani texts in roman types.

Because no copy of this 1577 *Doctrina Christam* now exists, most scholars have been reluctant to accept it as historical fact, a consensus confirmed by the most recent study on early Tamil books.[21] Graham Shaw, however, has demonstrated that its printing is beyond doubt: it was noted in contemporary letters (written by Valignano and Henriques) and listed in European library catalogues up to the end of the seventeenth century.[22] Fortunately, samples of the fonts used for that now missing book were reproduced when a second edition of the same catechism, using improved types, was printed in Quilon in 1578.[23] This second printed Tamil book was only sixteen pages, but a third catechism of 127 pages, a Tamil translation of another popular Portuguese text by Marcos Jorge, was printed, again with new types, in Cochin in 1579. Three catechisms (two were the same text), were printed in three consecutive years, with three sets of types, at three different locations on the west coast. Henriques's two other books were printed at Cochin: a confessionary (*Confessionairo*) of 214 pages in 1580; and a lives of the Saints (*Flos Sanctorum*), a prodigious work of 669 pages, in 1586.

Fortune has not smiled on these early Tamil books. As mentioned above, after the copy in the Leiden University library disappeared sometime before the early eighteenth century, no known copy survives of the 1577 *Doctrina Christam*. Only one copy of the 1578 *Doctrina Christam* is now extant, having passed through many hands before ending up at the Harvard University library. Two of the three surviving copies of the 1579 edition of *Doctrina Christam* were also lost in the middle of the twentieth century, one from the Sorbonne in Paris and the other from a Jesuit library in Belgium; the last surviving copy is at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (fortunately, a photostat copy had been made of the Paris copy before it disappeared). Both the 1586 *Flos Sanctorum* and the 1580 confessionary are known from a single copy each, at the Vatican and Bodleian, respectively; the latter was found by Graham Shaw in 1980, a comparatively recent date, which raises hopes that more copies of these first Tamil books may lie unknown in other libraries or private collections.

Henriques's output of five books, with a total of more than a thousand printed pages, is impressive by the standards of the day, but the impact of the dedicated Jesuit's labours is more difficult to assess. Unlike the earlier *Cartilha* and other books printed in roman letters, his catechisms, confessionary and lives of the Saints were printed in Tamil script because they were aimed at Tamils themselves. However, a handful of Christian religious texts, produced in a small number of copies by Europeans in their coastal enclaves and used in their missionary work on the other coast hardly suggests that these early printed books penetrated deeply into local literary culture; indeed, it would be almost two hundred and fifty years before Indians took up printing, to any substantial extent, on their own.[24] For south India, at least, this time lag might be explained in two ways. First, there was no demand: poets, scholars and rulers apparently saw no advantage or prestige in using print to produce what was already composed, heard and read through other means. Second, printing presses were difficult to obtain (the Jesuits, as we will soon learn, could not get one in the eighteenth century), and types for Indian scripts were extremely difficult to make: following the successful Tamil experiments in the sixteenth century,

and the Konkani failure, no new types were cast in India until the early eighteenth century. Paper was also scarce. Indeed, the scarcity of printing presses, types and paper remained a problem, especially for Indians, well into the nineteenth century.[25]

The printed book was also a rare object in early modern south India, even among missionaries, and knowledge of its wonders may have not spread much beyond Christian circles. Nevertheless, this new method of preserving and disseminating texts must have impressed a culture already committed to doing the same on palm leaves: if not practical or prestigious, it was at least novel. Sources for these initial Tamil reactions to the printed book are few and are recorded by Europeans, but they are suggestive. A Portuguese Jesuit history of 1710 (wrongly) identified the 1577 Tamil catechism as 'the first printed book that India saw on her soil', adding that 'by its novelty it helped a little to gain the goodwill of the natives'.[26] The novelty of the printed book is recorded again in eighteenth-century Protestant sources when these newly arrived missionaries distributed books among converts on the Coromandel Coast. But the depth of local desire for books is recorded even in the Preface to the 1579 catechism, addressed to the new Christians on Fishery Coast:

Because you wished for you and your descendants to achieve salvation in heaven, you have desired many different kinds of printed books and contributed large sums of money toward a printing press. We therefore present this book to you as a gift. Your financial support for this press has earned you respect and praise in the eyes of the world.[27]

Writing about a much later event, Homi Bhabha has suggested that one group of Indians displayed subversion of colonial authority and naturalisation of a foreign religion when they spoke to a local catechist about the printed Bible they were reading aloud in a grove of trees outside Delhi in 1817.[28] But the earliest printed books, in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, were probably viewed more like mirrors, clocks and other European objects brought to the Mughal courts at that time. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the mystique of the book in an essentially oral culture might, for some, still be a 'sign taken for wonders'.

When the precious few copies of Henriques's books reached the Fishery Coast, they were used in Christian rituals and displayed in churches. The number of literates among the thousands of Parava converts would have been small, and these early books were almost certainly read aloud in groups. During the 1540s, Xavier had distributed a written copy of a catechism in each village he visited and exhorted the neophyte Christians to 'meet in one place and sing all together the elements of the faith' on every Feast day.[29] The Annual Jesuit letter of 1600 mentions that the Tamil books had found their way into the hands of Hindus in the interior, where pundits admired the novelty of print.[30] However local people encountered one of these books, they would have quickly known that, although in Tamil letters, it was not a typical Tamil text but something brought in from the outside. These were the beginnings of a new perspective toward language.

For one thing, the woodblock prints on the front page of these early books are striking. Two books (the 1579 catechism and 1580 confessionary) display the traditional Jesuit emblem of IHS encircled by a shining sun, while the 1578 catechism shows, according to a Tamil Catholic scholar, 'the Holy Trinity worshipped by saints and martyrs', perhaps on Palm Sunday; but others will simply see a globe mounted by a cross, flanked by two bearded and robed men seated on a platform, above a crowd of spear-carrying men also with beards. The bilingual titles of the catechisms, printed in both roman (*Doctrina Christam*) and Tamil (*Tampiran Vanakkam, Kiristtiyani Vanakkam*), also signalled that these books were translations, produced from another culture. Although the second Tamil title also indicates that 'Christian' and other key words of the new faith (like *kuruc*, Portuguese 'cross') were being quickly assimilated into Tamil, the foreign source of the text was unmistakably marked by the use of 'diamond' signs (♦) before and after each of these Portuguese or Latin words transliterated into Tamil; for example, *kattolik* or *ikireca* (*ecglesia*, church) was framed by these special diamond signs. Curiously, later dictionaries prepared by Protestant missionaries adopted a similar mark, more like an asterisk, to indicate which words were derived from Sanskrit (a practice followed by the authoritative *Tamil Lexicon* into the late twentieth century). And if all these signs were missed, the 1578 catechism announced that it had been 'translated into

Tamil by Father Henri Henriques and Father Manuel de Sao Pedro'.

In addition to its appearance, the prose of these early books, especially the catechisms and confessionary, was unlike anything in Tamil to that date. Tamil commentaries (*urai*) were generally either lapidary, erudite annotations of poetic texts (*kurippurai*; longer forms were called *polippurai*) or rather fulsome praise of authors and gods (*payiram*).[31] The prose of the Catholic catechisms, by contrast, uses simple diction and constructions to speak with a new tone of urgency, and of persuasion, addressed directly to the reader/listener. A leading French scholar has argued that the language of the 1554 *Cartilha* was that spoken by Paravas on the Fishery Coast, and while there seems little evidence for this claim, it is true that the Tamil in Henriques's books uses many colloquial expressions.[32] The first Tamil books in print also contained praise-prose sections, to the Virgin Mary, for example, which were forerunners to an enormous and popular literature of Christian bhakti (largely by Vedanayakam Sastri in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries). But the overall tone of the catechisms is captured in a section headed 'Final Things' in the 1578 text: 'In the end there are only four things: death, judgement, hell, heaven', and in the last words of the 1579 text: 'Only by the name of Jesus will you be saved'.[33] A similar prose of advocacy, written in simple diction and appealing directly to readers, would be perfected by other missionaries in the eighteenth century but was not used by Tamil Hindus until perhaps the 1830s, when the *Crescent* newspaper lent its support to an anti-missionary campaign in Madras.

In addition to the Tamils who would have seen and heard these books on the east coast and its interior, there was a small group on the west coast who directly participated in producing them. Father Pero Luis and Father Manuel de Sao Pedro have already been mentioned as assisting Henriques in the work of translation; they also helped others to cast the all-important Tamil fonts. Pero Luis worked with Joao Goncalves for two years at Goa in order to prepare the fonts used in the 1577 catechism, but they managed to cast only fifty characters. Following that printing, Pero Luis went down to Quilon, where he worked with Father Joao de Faria, and together they added more letters but were still unable to produce a full set. These are presumably the 'learned

Tamils' who were acknowledged in the Preface to the 1579 catechism as having helped Henriques to perfect the orthography and fonts used in it. These men, and probably several unnamed others, were the first of an increasingly large number of Tamil—mostly but not exclusively Christian—pundits, poets and entrepreneurs, who worked with Europeans over the next two hundred and fifty years on translations into Tamil, on revising orthography, standardising spellings, preparing interlingual grammars and dictionaries, and in fashioning a modern prose. The consequence of these new literary practices was that Tamils began to view language from a new angle, not just as familiar speech and written verse, but as an object to be acquired, manipulated and improved, for definite purposes—for religious, social and political reform. No longer simply a register of change, language was itself seen as an instrument of change.

In summary, Henriques's books, published between 1577 and 1586, constitute the first phase of printing in Tamil. As translations, using interlingual titles, displaying Christian imagery, highlighting new words with diamond marks, and written in an unparalleled prose of advocacy using the conversational idiom, these books mark the beginning of a new literary culture in Tamil. Of the five innovations discussed in this chapter, only a new orthography, introduced in the eighteenth century, was not among Henriques's achievements (the script used in his books resembled that used for contemporary, written Tamil).

Nevertheless, the significance of the printing and literary work by Henriques and his assistants is underscored by the fact that no new Tamil fonts were cast in India until the early eighteenth century; and no new Tamil fonts were available at all until those made in Rome arrived on the Malabar coast in the 1670s. Only then, in 1677, almost a hundred years after Henriques's last book was another Tamil book printed in India; and that was a very different Tamil catechism, written by a very different Jesuit missionary named Roberto de Nobili.

Roberto de Nobili and the seventeenth century

Why there should have been this long gap in Tamil printing is an interesting question. Certainly there was no shortage of texts written

in or translated into Tamil by Jesuits in south India. Nor did the Jesuit presses remain idle during the seventeenth century; at various centres along the west coast some forty books were printed between 1600 and 1700, but only four in Tamil. As in Henriques's time, presses at Goa printed several books, in Portuguese, Latin and Konkani (using roman types); at least one book in Syriac types was printed at Vaipikkotta (not far from Ambalakad); at Rachol, south of Goa, the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens produced a purana of Christ's life (1616) as well as a Konkani grammar (1640), the first printed grammar of any Indian language, again in roman letters. And once the English East India Company established a centre at Surat, north of Bombay, a limited success was achieved in printing Hindu texts in 'Banian character' (probably Gujarati types).[34] The century-long lull in Tamil printing must therefore be explained by technical problems. First, there was the now persistent lack of good Tamil fonts; those cast in the sixteenth century were presumably either worn out or lost since the Tamil types used in the seventeenth century were cast in Rome and then taken to India. Second, as Shaw noted, there was a lack of printers with sufficient knowledge of Tamil; the official Jesuit printer in the province of Malabar at that time was a specialist in Konkani and was 'not known to have had any knowledge of Tamil'.[35] Even the few Tamil books that were printed in the 1670s might never have been produced; only a few years later, in 1684 the Portuguese officially withdrew support for Indian languages and ordered that education and missionary work be undertaken only in Portuguese and Latin. Printing in Indian languages resumed in Goa only in the 1820s.

When these Tamil books were printed during the seventeenth century, with the types made in Rome, it was not on the presses at Goa, but at Ambalakad, not far from Cochin, where the Jesuits had also established a college. Though only five in number and printed within a space of two years, these books might be called the second phase or the revival of Tamil printing. There were five books but only two texts. The first was de Nobili's catechism, *Nanopatecam*, printed posthumously in three volumes: volume 1 (parts 1 and 2) in 1677; volume 2 (part 3) in 1678; and volume 3 (part 4) also in 1678. The second text was Antem

de Proença's Tamil–Portuguese dictionary of 1679. This dictionary, the first to be printed in any Indian language, was a major innovation, while the catechism is remembered primarily because of its author.

Roberto de Nobili, an Italian Jesuit, arrived in Goa in 1605 and died near Madras in 1656. After spending a few years on the Fishery Coast, Nobili made a momentous move to Madurai, the capital of the ancient Pandya kings, where he established a new Jesuit mission. Proficient in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit, he wrote approximately ten works in Tamil (although others are often ascribed to him). The famous, three-volume catechism was an ambitious achievement consisting of eighty eight separate sections explicating the mysteries of the Christian truths; a similarly titled, but very different, text (*Nanopatecam*) presented similar ideas in an anthology of twenty-six lectures or sermons. Nobili also wrote biographies of the Virgin and Christ, as well as essays on theological topics. Beyond their sheer erudition, the significance of his writings is that they deliberately rejected the translation method of his predecessors and proposed instead assimilation.[36]

Unlike Henriques, for example, in order to create his catechism Nobili did not translate a Portuguese text into Tamil; instead he wrote his own manual, so that he might emphasise the mysteries and hidden truths of the new faith. He also departed from Henriques and others in rejecting their reliance on transliterating Portuguese or Latin words into Tamil; instead, Nobili invented or resuscitated Tamil words, often derived from Sanskrit, a language the Italian knew well. In all his Tamil writings, Nobili chose to write in a philosophical language in order to explicate his vedanta-influenced theology; but this reliance on Sanskrit-derived Tamil terms, instead of transliterated Portuguese or Latin terms, outraged fellow Jesuits, especially his Superiors, who argued that Henriques's texts had set an inviolable standard that should not be abandoned.[37] This debate about the proper Tamil to be used in translation, which continued throughout the colonial period and continues today whenever another translation of the Bible is proposed or printed, contributed to new ideas of language as a malleable object and an instrument of change.

Tamil pundits and poets had already faced the choice of 'which Tamil' for centuries before these missionaries arrived, but I would argue

that the missionaries' translations and interlingual dictionaries raised the stakes of choosing an appropriate linguistic register: it was no longer simply a matter of internally selecting words but of coining some and resignifying others to represent novel concepts and events.

Nobili's controversial linguistic practices are perhaps less well known than his use of the sacred thread and sandalwood paste, although they, too, derive from the same assimilationist stance. The noble-born Italian's adoption of local Hindu dress, customs, language and theology culminated in his claim that he was neither a 'parangi' (foreigner) nor a Portuguese but a Brahmin. This claim soon embroiled the entire Jesuit world in a dispute that later became the famous 'Malabar Rites' controversy. In disputing with the Jesuit authorities in Rome, Nobili called on the aid of his Tamil assistants; they had already helped him to write his theological tracts in Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit, but now Nobili involved them in an entirely new role, as witnesses in defence of his linguistic and cultural practices. As Ines Zupanov describes it, Nobili enlisted Tamils as 'native voices' in a 'proto-ethnographic' manner: first the 'testimonies' on both sides of the dispute were written in Tamil on palm leaf, then the Tamil text was translated into Portuguese and written on paper; finally, Nobili asked his Tamil supporters to co-sign the document to be sent to Rome.[38] Eventually, Nobili won his battle with Rome, and his assimilationist stance was followed by many Jesuits in the Madurai Mission, including Beschi. But the triumph was only temporary; the controversy simmered throughout the eighteenth century and eventually led to the suppression of the Jesuit order in India.

Despite his controversial life and his considerable scholarship, Roberto de Nobili made a limited contribution to the innovations from which a new Tamil literary culture emerged; his disputed prose did contribute to the debate over which Tamil to use, but the writings themselves did not: of his texts, only his catechism was printed before the nineteenth century, and none was ever widely read. This obscurity may in part be explained by the fact that many copies of his texts were undoubtedly lost when Dutch Protestants 'destroyed the libraries at Ambalakad and other places' in their battles against the Portuguese.[39] But it is also true that Nobili wrote his theological discourses in an

indigestibly turgid prose, which meant that they were 'impossible to memorize, recite or sing'.[40] If, as is often claimed, he were 'the father of Tamil prose', one would feel pity for the offspring. In truth, his philosophical, Sanskritised prose never gained popular acceptance; that honour belongs instead to one of his Jesuit successors, and to his Protestant adversaries, in the eighteenth century.

In fact, the most important Tamil book printed at Ambalakad in the seventeenth century was not written by Nobili. Rather it was a Tamil–Portuguese dictionary. Where Henriques had laboured but failed, another Jesuit, Antem de Proença (1625–66) succeeded, posthumously in 1679.[41] Proença's dictionary was a limited success, however, containing only some 16,000 main entries, and the printing showed no real improvement over that achieved a hundred years earlier; again, good Tamil fonts were in such short supply that, according to one source, the Tamil words were printed with wooden types and the European words with metal types.[42] This was the first book printed in India to use western alphabetical order, and while it is easy to overstate and difficult to measure the impact of this method of organising language, it did become standard for many intellectuals in Madras in the colonial century. As the first printed dictionary in any Indian language, Proença's work contributed to the formation of a new literary culture which increasingly relied on reference books and language learning. Nevertheless, and like the other innovations that resulted from colonial contact, Proença's lexicography would be significantly improved upon in the eighteenth century.

Beschi and the Lutherans in the eighteenth century

It was not until the eighteenth century that the practices initiated in the sixteenth century began to lodge themselves firmly in Tamil literary culture. The rise of Tamil printing was dramatic: in the first two centuries of Indian publishing, only ten books (and only six different texts) were printed in Tamil; by 1800, however, the total number of Tamil publications had reached 266.[43] This increase was part of a rise in printing throughout India, which saw the number of printed books grow from a mere nineteen in the sixteenth century and forty in the

seventeenth century, to 1712 new books printed in the eighteenth century. But the increase in Tamil printing (266 books by 1800), and to a certain extent in Sinhala (139), so far exceeds that in Persian (100) or Bengali (84) that it must be attributed to a second development: from the early years of the eighteenth century, presses were working on the east coast, at Tranquebar, Madras and Pondicherry, and across the Palk Straits at Colombo. In fact, none of the early centres for Tamil printing on the west coast—Goa, Cochin, Quilon, Ambalakad—produced a single book in any language in the eighteenth century.[44] In part this was due to the shift in official Portuguese policy away from Indian languages; but it also follows a more general trend, in which, by the end of the eighteenth century, political and economic power had shifted from Goa and its dependencies to Madras, Colombo, Calcutta and Bombay.

This relocation of printing presses in India, mirroring the decline of Portuguese power in the subcontinent and the rise of Dutch and British companies, wrought immediate and long-lasting changes in Tamil printing and literary culture. Early in the eighteenth century a printing press came to a Lutheran mission at Tranquebar, a small Danish colony on the Coromandel Coast. A second arrival, nearby and only a few years later, ran counter to the growth of British and Protestant influence but also changed Tamil literary culture: the Jesuit missionary, C.G. Beschi.

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, these two rival camps, the Lutherans and the Jesuits located barely fifty miles apart, engaged in theological disputes, arising from their differing interpretations of the Christian scriptures and approaches to missionary work. Underneath all the disputations, however, was Beschi the man—consummate Tamil scholar and flamboyant missionary. Following Nobili's path, he was a controversial figure and went native, in an even more ostentatious fashion than his predecessor, which angered his Lutheran neighbours.[45] At times the antagonism between them became aggressive, and even spilled over into violence and death.

This internecine Christian dispute would have little bearing on our main narrative if not for the fact that it was conducted by the Lutherans

through printed books and pamphlets and that it provoked Beschi to write tracts that led to the development of modern Tamil prose. Between them, Beschi and the Lutherans also produced major dictionaries and grammars, influential translations and early discursive prose. But it was the Jesuit who had the greater influence on these literary practices, which took root in the eighteenth century and gave a defining shape to modern Tamil literary culture. Beschi wrote more than twenty books—including an epic poem in Tamil and several grammars and dictionaries; and although only one of his books was printed during his lifetime (because the Jesuits had no printing press), many of them became standard reference works by the early nineteenth century. In addition to the script reform that he brought in (or reintroduced), Beschi's prose writings broke new ground in Tamil literary history. One of his works, *Paramartta Kuruvin Katai* (hereafter 'Guru Simpleton'), was the first example of Tamil prose fiction, the first Tamil folktale brought into literary culture and the first printed book of Tamil folklore. That printing occurred much later, in 1822, in London, before which we must describe Beschi's rivalry with the Lutherans, the rise of Protestant printing and the shift of literary culture to Madras.

Costanzo Giuseppe Beschi was born in 1680 in Castiglione delle Stiviere, in northern Italy, and entered the Jesuit order at age eighteen. For the next two years he underwent noviciate training at Novellara and then taught for a year at the Jesuit college in Ravenna; from there he was sent to Bologna, where he studied philosophy and theology for a full decade. Beschi was ordained as a priest in 1709, and sailed from Lisbon to Goa in the autumn of 1710. From Goa, he proceeded to Ambalakad and was eventually sent to work as a missionary on the Tamil-speaking east coast, where he entered the Madurai Mission. Over the next several years Beschi worked at a number of different Jesuit stations in the districts of Tinnevelly, Madurai and Trichinopoly, finally settling in Elakkuricci, near Trichinopoly, in 1717; and there he stayed, more or less, for the next thirty years. Beschi's small mission of Elakkuricci was little more than fifty miles from Tranquebar, where the Lutherans proved to be a constant thorn in Beschi's side, but he was driven away only by the armies ravaging the Tamil country in the 1730s and 1740s.

C.G. Beschi. Source: Muttusami Pillei 1840.
(Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library)

At the beginning of this chaotic period, Beschi enjoyed the protection of local rulers, especially Chanda Sahib, the Muslim usurper who in 1736 overran Trichinopoly and ousted the Hindu Nayaka ruler, only to be ousted himself and taken captive by the Marathas five years later. Having lost Chanda Sahib's political and military support, Beschi fled south to the Fishery Coast, to Ramnad and Tuticorin, and eventually travelled to Ambalakad, where he died, it appears, in 1747.

Only a few years before Beschi finally settled in Elakkuricci, the Lutherans had arrived at Tranquebar; by 1711, these Protestant missionaries from Germany, with the support of the Danish crown and later the London-based Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), set up the first printing press on the east coast. Within twenty years, the industrious Lutherans had produced more than a hundred books, including the first ever Tamil translation of the Bible; by the end of the century, they had printed a total of 338 separate books (bibles, gospels, catechisms, grammars, dictionaries, almanacs, etc). A few were printed in German, Dutch, Latin and Danish, many in Portuguese, others increasingly in English, but most of their books were in Tamil.

Now the Jesuits had a rival camp. Having dominated the missionary field in the Tamil country since the arrival of Xavier almost two hundred years before, and having led the modernisation of Tamil through the achievements of Henriques, Nobili and de Proenca and others (Bouchet, Rossi, Leve, Bourzes in the Madurai Mission, and Goncalves in Ceylon), the Jesuits now faced a challenge from their doctrinal nemesis. Since their sixteenth-century arrival, the Jesuits had spread out from the Fishery Coast and established major centres, not only at Madurai and other towns inland from the Fishery Coast, but also to the north, near Tanjore and Trichinopoly, and even in the Carnatic. By 1700, Jesuit sources claim that 45,000 Christians were under their pastoral care in the Fishery Coast alone;[46] by mid-century, one reliable source claimed a total of 350,000 Catholics in all south Indian Jesuit missions.[47] But soon after the Lutherans arrived at Tranquebar they, too, were claiming several thousand converts, some former Jesuits; and although the total number of Protestants in 1800 was only about 50,000, most of these were concentrated in the Tanjore

and Trichinopoly area where Beschi also worked.[48] More alarming to the Jesuits, and not unrelated to this success in conversions, the Lutherans had also usurped that other Jesuit specialisation, printing in Tamil; although pioneered and controlled by the Jesuits, in the eighteenth century Tamil printing became a Lutheran enterprise.

To the Lutherans, however, Beschi was alarming. To them, he was not simply a formidable theological opponent, but an arrogant one, who exhibited all the typical excesses of Jesuits, especially Romanish compromises with local customs. Legendary accounts of Beschi, which were first collected and written in the early nineteenth century, portray him as a bejewelled Hindu raja, sporting sandalwood paste on his forehead and riding in a palanquin with full royal accompaniment; even during his lifetime, Beschi's Jesuit superiors in Rome criticised his 'extravagance'. Worse still to Lutherans, Beschi was said to have served as Diwan (or Prime Minister) to an Indian ruler, Chanda Sahib. Much in the role of an Indian poet-saint, Beschi was also invested with near-magical powers, with which he overcame opponents in debate and converted stunned Hindus to Christianity.

These images of Beschi's excess—as the Oriental raja and magical poet—rest largely on two texts written by his Tamil biographer, Muttusami Pillai, who worked at the College of Fort St George in Madras. When, in about 1817, he was sent by F.W. Ellis, then head of the College, to collect whatever he could find of Beschi's writings that still survived, Muttusami Pillai gathered anecdotes as well, and wrote up his account of Beschi's life and writings in 1822; this Tamil text (the first modern literary biography in Tamil) was not printed until 1843, but Muttusami Pillai produced his own English translation which was published in 1840.[49] Much later, in the early twentieth century, Tamil scholars added considerable historical detail by drawing on Beschi's own letters and those of his contemporaries.[50] The Beschi of the 1822 Tamil text, however, remains closest to the nineteenth-century popular perception of this extraordinary Italian who wrote Tamil grammars and dictionaries, epic poetry and literary folktales, with such consummate skill that some Tamil scholars have refused to acknowledge his authorship.[51]

Despite his legendary powers to convert Hindus into Christians, Beschi's Jesuitical insolence, personal flamboyance and his reported adoption of Hindu practices infuriated many of his fellow Christians, beginning with his contemporaries at Tranquebar and continuing with those who dominated south Indian Christianity in the nineteenth century. A measure of that enmity is revealed in a handwritten note found in the British Library's copy of Muttusami Pillai's 1840 English text; at the bottom of the page describing Beschi riding in procession with thirty horsemen and so on, a displeased reader has written in large letters: 'Somewhat different from the poverty of the Apostles who subsisted by their manual labour.'[52] Other critics were less censorious, only observing, for example, that Beschi 'assumed the pomp and pageantry of a Hindu guru. He fell in with their prejudices, went about dressed in purple flowing robes.'[53] Many simply commented that his writing style was too flowery and ornate; one Protestant assessment of Beschi's life and writing, printed as a Preface to one of his books in 1844, sums up the critique by accusing him of

adapting his discourses to the taste of his hearers and readers and of becoming all things to all men, he falsified the narratives and doctrines of our holy Religion ... [he] will receive such a reward as the motives which actuated him while here below will render right and proper.[54]

To be fair, however, most Protestant missionaries admired Beschi's literary skills—they printed one of his grammars and another of his books (*Vetiyar Olukkam*, a manual for catechists) became standard reading for them by the early nineteenth century—but nearly all of them deplored his theology.

During Beschi's lifetime, his rivalry with the Lutherans in south India was intense, and in part expressed through the printing press. Indeed, no greater contrast could be imagined than that between the Italian Beschi and the German Bartholomaus Ziegenbalg, who along with Johann Grundler, set up the Protestant mission and press at Tranquebar in 1706. While Beschi reportedly travelled in a palanquin dressed in turban and robes, Ziegenbalg stuck to northern European dress, wearing a coat and hat, even when he ventured into villages near

Tranquebar. A contemporary letter admitted that local people did not know what to make of him, and 'even dogs and cows made loud noises' when he approached.[55] Ziegenbalg died in 1719 and, as far as we know, never met Beschi, who lived but a short fifty miles away. But by his prodigious printing, achieved in those few years at Tranquebar, Ziegenbalg ensured that the lives of these two great European scholars of Tamil would meet, and not in harmony.

Six years after arriving in Tranquebar, Ziegenbalg had established the first printing press on the east coast. It was not too soon for the German Lutheran, who was acutely conscious of the role of printed books in spreading 'divine Truths' during the 'happy Reformation' in Europe.[56] Ziegenbalg would know well that Martin Luther's theses did not long remain tacked to the church in Wittenberg in 1517; quickly printed, they became 'known throughout Germany in a fortnight and throughout Europe within a month'.[57] Indeed, before the press arrived at Tranquebar, Ziegenbalg had often complained that the traditional method of transcribing Tamil texts on palm leaves was arduous, time-consuming and expensive:

Whereas the art of Printing is not known in these Parts, Transcribing must supply the Place of the Press ... our Charity-School cannot well go forward without taking in some Men to assist us ... first to translate and then with some Iron Tools to print upon Leaves of Palm-Trees'.[58]

Having employed six men in these tasks, Ziegenbalg explained to his patrons in the Danish court that he desired a press, with Tamil and roman types, to avoid the costs that drained the limited budget of this missionary outpost.[59] His increasing frustration was repeatedly expressed in his letters to Denmark, which were translated into English and passed on to the SPCK in London, who soon answered his call. In early 1711, the SPCK, itself only a decade old, sent by ship 213 copies of a Portuguese bible, roman types, hundred reams of paper, a printing press and a printer. But it was not all clear sailing. The ship was captured by the French near Brazil and was eventually ransomed by the Governor of Fort St George at Madras (not the last time that French-Anglo warfare would directly affect the fortunes of printing in south India). Still, when

it finally reached Tranquebar in 1712, only the bibles, press, types and paper were on board; earlier, when the ship had been captured by the French, the printer, Jonas Finck had been arrested and then released, but he later died, having fallen overboard near the Cape of Good Hope.[60]

Despite these setbacks, a Danish soldier somehow managed to operate the press, which printed a small Portuguese catechism with the roman types in 1712. Soon, however, Tamil types cast in Halle, Germany arrived with German printers and the Lutherans set to work. The first Tamil book issued by the Lutheran press was a pamphlet in refutation of Hinduism, and this was quickly followed by Ziegenbalg's translations of biblical scriptures: the Four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles in 1714; part of the New Testament in 1715; and after his death, the Old Testament, completed by his successor, Benjamin Schultze, between 1723 and 1727. With the establishment of both a foundry for casting types and a paper-mill, the Lutherans finally had a self-sufficient print shop, which became central to their mission. In the first eight years alone (1712–20), they printed a total of sixty-five books (in all languages), and another fifty-two in the next decade. By the end of the century, the Lutherans had produced a total of 338 books, making the Tranquebar press the longest-lived and most prodigious of any in India during the eighteenth century.[61] When it was shown to local Indians, Ziegenbalg reported that they 'were astonish'd at this rare invention, never known before in these Countries'.[62]

The phenomenal achievement by the newly arrived Lutherans did not go unnoticed by their Jesuit neighbours. In his Annual Letter of 1727, Father P. Giulani wrote:

They [Lutherans] have printed and published the Sacred Scriptures in rather coarse Tamil and have disfigured them by their commentaries, full of errors against the true faith, and have published a good many other books, more or less heretical. But the types are excellent, well-cut, numerous and varied. They are at least of seven or eight kinds, and of various sizes. Already a few Christians of the lower strata of society, some Pariahs, enticed by the love of rupees, fell away at their instigation; and the number of apostates is daily increasing. We wish we could oppose book to book. But means fail us. We have no press, and can scarcely oppose one book to one thousand books.[63]

The underfunded Jesuits, still forced to produce laborious palm leaf or paper copies of manuscripts, struck back with the only weapon they had—a superior knowledge of Tamil. The Jesuit authorities in Madurai ordered Beschi to write a book that would expose the errors of the heretics in Tranquebar.[64] Beschi, who had just completed his Tamil masterpiece, an epic poem of 3615 stanzas on the life of St Joseph, responded with a vitriolic attack, a long and closely argued text entitled *Veta Vilakkam* ('Explanation of Religion'). The Lutheran counter-attack was to publish *Tirucapai Petakam* ('Schism in the Church'), a Tamil translation of a Portuguese text explaining the glories of the Reformation, which they kindly sent to Beschi for his edification. Beschi fired back by refuting the Lutheran position in a brief pamphlet, *Petakamaruttal* ('Refutation of the Schism'), followed by another detailing Lutheran lies (*Lutterinattiyalpu*, 'The Essence of Lutheranism'). Beschi apparently silenced the Lutherans with his prose since, as his biographer Muttusami Pillai wrote, 'after that, nothing more was heard from them.'[65]

Beschi's attacks against the Lutherans were nothing if not withering. It was not just that their doctrines were wrong, but that their knowledge of Tamil was poor; and worst of all, they chose to use their fallacious Tamil to explain their flawed theology by translating the holy scriptures into Tamil. As if that were not enough, they then flaunted their heresy by printing their translations; we might remember that among the first Tamil books issued from Tranquebar were translations of the Four Gospels and the New Testament. Nothing would gall Jesuits more than those translations. Like most Catholics, Jesuits believed that the scriptures could not and should not be translated, that the word of God must be apprehended in the original and that any attempt to convert it would distort it. For Protestants, and especially Lutherans, however, translating the Bible was an essential, perhaps the most valued, calling for a missionary; European translators into English had been martyred, and a similar if not identical glory awaited those who spread God's truth in other tongues.[66]

As for Ziegenbalg's mastery of Tamil, one can only say that he did not waste any time: he began his translation of the Bible only two years after arriving in India and completed it within two more.[67] Beschi, by

comparison, completed his magnum opus, the epic poem *Tempavani*, sixteen years after his arrival in India. Translating into Tamil may not be as demanding as composing an original text in the language, but putting the Bible into Tamil in four years' time is quick work indeed. Although he did translate Tamil ethical literature and wrote a long essay on south Indian Hinduism (both unpublished until the nineteenth century), Ziegenbalg appears to have had little respect for Tamil literature. He explained that he had gathered traditional texts by buying them from the 'widows of deceased Brahmins' so that he could understand their idolatry the better to condemn it. He also was one of the first Europeans to identify poetry as the cardinal sin of Tamil, the extirpation of which would become a rallying cry for literary-cultural reformers throughout the next century. Ziegenbalg had this to say to a Brahmin at Tranquebar:

I am all Amazement when I see your Blindness in not discerning Spiritual Things; as if you had sworn Eternal Allegiance to the Dictates and Poetical Fictions of Lying Bards; who riding upon the Ridges of Metaphors and Allegories, have rhimed you into the Belief of lying incomprehensible Perplexities.[68]

For Beschi, who also deplored Hindu superstitions, Tamil literature was a source of inspiration. Whereas the German Lutheran was content to write that Tamil 'books are stuffed with Abundance of pleasant Fables and witty Inventions', the Italian Catholic steeped himself so deeply in Tamil literature that later Tamil scholars would regard him as an accomplished poet in the language.[69] Still, Beschi was an elitist in both social and intellectual terms; he had a low opinion of most ordinary Indians and prided himself on the purity of his own Tamil compositions. Although Beschi admired Nobili, he did not refrain from adding that his translations of prayers into Tamil 'cannot be highly praised'.[70] Beschi's attack on the Lutherans therefore targeted literary and linguistic, as much as theological, weaknesses.

Shrewdly Beschi began his attack by refusing to acknowledge that the language written and printed by the Lutherans was proper 'Tamil'; rather, he dismissively called it the 'eastern tongue' (*kil ticai moli*). In order to press home his advantage, he also employed imagery and figures

of speech familiar to a Hindu audience. The Protestant Reformation, for example, is described as having 'poisoned the *amirtam* of the words of Jesus.'[71] A few pages later he returns to this image, and others: 'When these Tranquebarians cannot even write the name of their own country in correct Tamil,' wrote Beschi, 'their translations of the Bible are like a gem thrown in the mud, like poison mixed with ambrosia, like black ink spilled on a beautifully drawn picture.'[72] Following the precedent set by Nobili, Beschi also frequently invoked caste hierarchy to valorise the Jesuit mission and disparage his Protestant opponents; like his predecessor, Beschi saw Jesuits as European Brahmins, of superior intellectual and literary talents, and preferred to convert Brahmins, leaving lower castes to the Protestants. In his *Petakamaruttal*, Beschi defended Jesuit guardianship of the Bible against pollution by the infidels speaking the 'eastern tongue' with this striking image:

Is it possible for a washerwoman, a Panchama woman, picking over oysters [sic] in the paddy field, to explain the Chintamani or discuss the Tholkappiyam? Is it not proper that the Scriptures, like a tank of drinking water, should be guarded from the pollution of the unclean and the casteless, who shall, instead, be served with a potfull by the guardian brahmin?[73]

But the most famous and (mis)quoted passage is that which describes the 'eastern tongue' as burning the readers' ears like a 'raging fire' and concludes: 'No one can regard what the Tranquebarians have written in the name of the Holy Scriptures without anger and laughter.'[74]

Then Beschi plays his trump card—his opponents' ignorance of Tamil language and literature. At one point he likens the Lutherans to little schoolchildren 'in the second standard who do not understand a word of literary Tamil'; and later he asks sarcastically, 'We know that people "grow up by [drinking] milk", but has anyone heard of "growing someone by milk"?'[75] His most scathing remarks, however, are reserved for their lamentable knowledge of Tamil literature:

These Tranquebarians say, 'We came to this country and studied Tamil' [Beschi has them say *paticcu*, the unrefined form of the verb], which should mean that they have read all the Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts and books— *Tolkappiyam, Nannul, Iru porul karikai alankaram*, and other grammars, plus

the 18 Puranas, the sthalapuranas, 64 arts and philosophies, the two divisions of Saivism, the *Tirukkural* and *Nalatiyar, Cintamani, Cilappatikaram, Ramayanam*. Their claim should mean that they have studied all of this and more, without fail. ... But their claim is like putting on the disguise of the lion, king of animals: as soon as the mouth is opened, the truth is revealed and the other animals, assembled to hear, start to laugh.[76]

Wise enough to know that more than vitriolic prose was needed to defeat the Lutherans, Beschi had an image of Mary (in 'the Indian style') set up at Elakkuricci; as Beschi himself claimed, it was the power of this Virgin that in the end 'was the *coup de grace* for the Lutherans'.[77]

The Lutherans, however, appeared to weather Beschi's withering prose. Armed with their printed Tamil Bibles, the missionaries and their catechists continued to gain converts from the local population in the Tanjore and Trichinopoly areas where Beschi lived: between 1717 and 1730, the number of Protestants living in villages around Tanjore is reported to have risen from a mere fifteen to 367.[78] Beschi, who would have seen this activity with his own eyes, wrote that the Lutherans, 'intent on the ruin of souls, roam the fold, seeking whom they may devour'.[79] One particular soul, who was stolen by the Lutherans in this way, was at the centre of the print rivalry, and may have even ignited it. His name was Rajanayakan, a third-generation Catholic and Paraiyar convert, who was also a low-ranking officer in the army of the Maratha king of Tanjore. The story, as told in Protestant sources, is that this devout Catholic was unable to quench his thirst for the knowledge of Jesus because the Catholics had no books to give him; then, in 1725, his reading of Ziegenbalg's translation of the Gospels and Acts changed his life: 'When I had thus obtained the book my longing was satisfied by it. I used to read it all day and then from the evening till midnight by a light.'[80]

Rajanayakan also read other books printed at Tranquebar, including translations of the Bible and Ziegenbalg's rant against heathenism, and was soon baptised as a Protestant; he then became an active catechist, established a congregation in the Hindu temple-town of Tanjore, and converted both Hindus and Catholics. The Jesuits did not idly let this man switch sides. In a letter written to the Lutherans at Tranquebar,

Rajanayakan accused Beschi of sending henchmen to stop the apostate by any means, short of murder; these Catholics reportedly attempted to destroy his house and later, in 1731, killed his father.[81] Rajanayakan, however, survived and by mid-century had extended the Protestant congregation in Tanjore by building a school and prayer hall; this school would soon produce the most important literary figure in the history of Tamil Protestantism, Vedanayakam Sastri, who created a unique blend of Tamil literature, mixing German pietism with Tamil bhakti.[82]

Among the long-term outcomes of this struggle between Beschi and the Lutherans is the rise of Protestant printing and the shift of Tamil printing from the Coromandel Coast to the growing metropolis of Madras. Defeated by the prodigious Lutheran printing press, the Jesuits never recovered the advantage they held before the Lutherans had arrived; and by 1740, they were in open retreat: missionaries in the field left and converts dwindled.[83] This change in the history of Tamil printing took place in the context of a more general shift from Portuguese to British power in south India, as mentioned above, and the steady growth of Protestant influence and decline of Jesuit influence in Tamil literary culture during the eighteenth century.

The controversy of the 'Malabar Rites', as already mentioned, slowly eviscerated Jesuit influence in Asia throughout the eighteenth century, and eventually resulted in the suppression of the Society of Jesus. Although it had more to do with Jesuits in China than with those in India, Papal scrutiny extended to the Madurai Mission as well; supported by the Capuchins in Pondicherry, the investigation began a few years before Beschi arrived in India and it continued throughout his lifetime. In 1704, a 551-page document prepared by a team sent out from Rome to south India listed the flashpoints: the avoidance of saliva in baptism, the use of the marriage badge (*tali*), the sacred thread and a man's top-knot (*kutumi*), saying the liturgy in languages other than Latin, and so on. Reversing the accommodations agreed with Nobili almost a century before, the Pope upheld these objections, with some compromises (the *tali*, for example, was acceptable if it contained an image of the Holy Virgin) and later reaffirmations. With the Society suppressed in Portugal in 1759, 228 Jesuits were forced to leave Goa; then followed similar

decrees in other European countries and finally the worldwide suppression by Papal decree in 1773. The Jesuit Mission of Madurai, home to Nobili and Beschi, was restored only in 1836.[84] Although the suppression did not mean the immediate cessation of Jesuit activity in India, the decline, if gradual, was dramatic: the number of Jesuit fathers and catechists in south India (Goa, Malabar and Madurai missions) in the sixteenth century was more than 1000; by 1720 it had dropped to less than three hundred, and by 1760, after the first wave of suppression, only a few score remained.[85]

Another factor behind the Jesuit decline was that they were losers in the Anglo-French wars that tore apart the Tamil countryside from the 1730s to the 1760s. The French at Pondicherry, and their Indian supporters, notably Doust-ali Khan at Vellore, provided support for Jesuits, especially Beschi, who had an audience with Doust-ali Khan before Khan was killed in battle in 1740. But it was Chanda Sahib who was Beschi's most consistent support in these war years; Beschi, as we know, is reported to have been Diwan to Chanda Sahib, the French-puppet at Trichinopoly, and to have received tax-free lands from him. Whatever the truths of those stories, after Chanda Sahib's capture by the Marathas, Beschi fled the region, but the prisoner returned to Trichinopoly at the head of a massive army in 1749. If, as is often said, Robert Clive's victory over Chanda Sahib in 1752 buried French hopes in south India, it also hastened the decline of the Jesuit influence in Tamil literary culture.

The French had a printing press at Pondicherry in the mid-eighteenth century, and Jesuit printing undoubtedly would have been revived there (after its cessation in the late seventeenth century). But political events again intervened to redirect the history of printing in south India, and the printing of Tamil texts in Pondicherry was delayed until the 1840s. The Lutherans, on the other hand, grew in literary and political influence throughout the eighteenth century. Having established their dominance through the press at their little mission in Tranquebar and having been taken under the wing of the SPCK in London, the Lutherans soon extended their printing efforts to larger centres of trade and politics, under British protection. In 1737 they sent a Danish type-caster to

Colombo, where he prepared new Tamil types and printed the Tamil Lord's Prayer in 1739 (the same year that the first printed Sinhala book, part of the Gospels, appeared); parts of the Tamil Bible were printed in Colombo in 1741.[86] Of far more consequence, however, was the establishment of a Protestant mission and printing press at Madras. That press had in fact been under French control at Pondicherry; its capture and transfer to British Madras under the control of SPCK in the 1760s well illustrates the influence of politics on the history of Tamil printing in the eighteenth century.

Since Tamil had been the first South Asian language in print, it is perhaps not surprising that Madras was the first of the three colonial metropolises to print books. Benjamin Schultze set up the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in 1726 at Vepery, outside Madras, but this new venture only took over from Tranquebar as the centre of Protestant missionary and printing activities after mid-century under the leadership of J. Fabricius. When the English fleet besieged Pondicherry in 1761, Sir Eyre Coote confiscated a printing press from the French Governor's palace and took it, along with the French printer, Delon, and some types, to Madras. There Fabricius convinced Coote to give the printing press and types to him, with the undertaking that requests for printing from Fort St George would take priority over missionary work. In 1762 the SPCK press at Vepery issued a calendar, soon followed by several Tamil books, pre-dating the first books printed at Calcutta and Bombay by more than a decade.[87]

Soon thereafter, by 1766, the Vepery missionaries had their own press, so the original one, along with Delon the printer, was transferred to Fort St George, where it became known as the Government Press. The Vepery press was now the SPCK press, and its first Tamil book was a small catechism, prepared by Fabricius and printed, with types cut in Halle, in 1766. The two most important books printed at Vepery in the eighteenth century, however, came considerably later: Fabricius' own Tamil dictionary in 1779 (exactly a century after Proença's historic achievement) and a popular translation of *Pilgrim's Progress* (*Oru parateci yon puniyan carittiram*) in 1793. Later, in the nineteenth century, the SPCK press at Vepery changed its name to Diocesan Press, still in operation today. This extension of Protestant printing was accompanied

by an improvement in technology, too; by the early 1770s, the SPCK press at Vepery had cut its own Tamil types, which were used to print Fabricius' translation of the New Testament in 1772 and remained in use for a century, until the 1870s.[88]

New literary practices

By the end of the eighteenth century, then, printing in south India had passed into the hands of Protestants, with whom it had moved north to Madras, where a new literary culture was emerging. Central to that development, however, were a set of literary practices fostered by the Jesuit–Lutheran rivalry and perfected through the long course of the century; the competition for conversion stimulated both Jesuits and Lutherans, in print and in writing, to improve on the literary practices begun two centuries earlier. Translation was the speciality of the Lutherans and script reform belonged to the Jesuits, but both contributed to interlingual grammars and dictionaries, and to the development of discursive prose. And for the first time folklore was brought within the sphere of Tamil literary culture; before introducing Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton', however, we need to assess these wider literary achievements.

One literary practice that took firm root in Tamil literary culture in the eighteenth century was the production of interlingual grammars and dictionaries; even more than translations, and as noted earlier in this chapter, these texts were the direct result of colonial contact. We have mentioned Proença's Tamil–Portuguese dictionary of 1679, as well as Fabricius' Tamil–English work exactly a hundred years later.[89] Beschi also produced five dictionaries, four of which were interlingual: Tamil–Latin and Portuguese–Latin–Tamil, Tamil–French and Tamil–French, all in the 1740s; other interlingual dictionaries are often attributed to Beschi, but they are usually copies of one of these four.[90] We may also note that he did not produce a Tamil–English dictionary, which had to wait for the Protestants. Beschi's four interlingual dictionaries were written for Europeans as learning tools, but his fifth and final dictionary was written entirely in Tamil for Tamils; and it influenced Tamil literature long after its author's death. Composed in 1732, the *Catur-akarati* ('Four-part Dictionary') may be monolingual, but it

represents an admixture of European and Tamil lexicographical tradi-
tions: its outer structure followed the Tamil (and Sanskrit) *nikantu* or
dictionary model in its four parts, arranged by word function, but its
inner design conformed to European practices of alphabetisation and
the use of prose.[91] Alphabetisation had been used in a late sixteenth-
century Tamil dictionary (*Akarati Nikantu*), but only for the initial
letter, whereas Beschi's work extended this system up to the last letter.[92]
It is also true that Henriques' 1586 book listed the saints in alphabetical
order, and that Proenca's 1679 Portuguese–Tamil dictionary was alpha-
betical, but it was Beschi who actually brought the practice into Tamil
literary tradition.

Despite antipathy to Beschi's theology and lifestyle, Protestants
eagerly embraced his writings. The Lutherans at Tranquebar wrote
to him asking for his permission to print his *Catur-akarati*, but he
refused; apparently when they had printed his grammar of common
Tamil in 1738, it had been bound with another grammar by the Prot-
estant missionary Walther, displeasing Beschi.[93] When the Lutherans
wrote for permission to the Bishop of Mylapore, Beschi's superior,
they got no answer. Eventually, they bought a copy from a soldier,
who had got hold of a copy which Beschi had left behind when he
fled the area around 1741; when they again asked Beschi for per-
mission to use it to prepare a new dictionary that would also include
Ziegenbalg's unpublished work, we understand why Beschi repeated
his refusal. His *Catur-akarati* remained unpublished because of this
until 1824, after which it went through many editions and influenced
Tamil scholars, including the famous U.V. Swaminatha Iyer.[94]

The first bilingual Tamil grammar printed in India was also written
by Beschi (Ziegenbalg's grammar was printed in Halle in 1715). Again
Beschi produced not just one grammar, but three; and again, one of
these was monolingual but bicultural. *Tonnul Vilakkam* (1730) followed
traditional Tamil grammars (especially *Nannul*) in its overall organisation
of five divisions: *col* (words), *porul* (meaning), *eluttu* (letters), *yappu*
(prosody) and *ani* (rhetoric); but it introduced new features as well,
such as extensive use of prose and a section on the four Hindu goals
of life. In a difficult exercise of synthesis, Beschi also reduced the nearly

thousand grammatical rules (in most traditional grammars) to just 370; and in a bold act of scholarship, whereas traditional grammars typically only framed rules and adduced examples to illustrate them, Beschi commented upon them in prose.[95] For example, he frequently drew aphorisms from the *Tirukkural* to demonstrate the purity of language, which, in his opinion, neither the *Kamparamayanam* nor *Jivakacintamani* (the two jewels among the then-known Tamil classics) but only the Bible achieved.[96] *Tonnul Vilakkam*, first printed in 1830, was written in Tamil, but Beschi later translated it into Latin for Europeans, with the title *Clavis humanorium*, which was printed only in 1876.

Beschi wrote two other grammars in Latin intended for use by Europeans, one for common Tamil (probably in 1728) and another for literary Tamil (in 1730). The second of these was of limited use, since few non-Tamils could follow it, but the first, his grammar of common Tamil was probably the most widely used and influential printed book on Tamil before 1850.[97] Crucially, it was accepted by the Lutherans, who printed it at Tranquebar in 1738, presumably with the author's permission and certainly with that of Bishop Joseph of Mylapore, who added a Preface, dated 2 November 1737, blessing the book. The Lutherans may even have printed Beschi's grammar from the manuscript now in the British Library, which has a printed slip that reads: 'Written in a beautiful hand by Constantius Josephus Beschi ... (Missionary in Madurai), 29 December 1729';[98] the more than two hundred and fifty small pages of this manuscript, which are indeed beautifully written, are easier to read than the poorly printed edition of 1738. The grammar was later translated into English by Henry Horst and printed at Madras in 1806, and translated again, more accurately, by George Mahon and printed by the College of Fort St George in 1848.

Beschi's grammar of common Tamil is important also because he uses it to set forth his scheme for reforming Tamil script, another of the practices that contributed to a new literary culture in the eighteenth century. Although the use of dots over consonants to indicate the inherent consonantal sound (without a vowel) is described in the oldest Tamil grammar, it apparently fell out of use until the Italian Jesuit

rehabilitated it. Equally important, Beschi cleared up a major source of confusion by distinguishing short and long forms of two vowels (o and e), both as independent vowels and when joined with consonants; as he explained in his Preface to his common grammar, earlier grammars prescribed the use of a line over the vowel to distinguish the short from the long form, but this method had fallen into disuse.[99] Beschi also rationalised the orthography for the three separate forms of 'r' (r, ra, rA). Without these distinctions, readers of manuscripts and early printed books often laboured to decide which letter and which word, and thus which meaning, was intended. Although, as Meenakshisundaram admits, we cannot be precise about what Beschi invented, reintroduced or just popularised, his was the most influential contribution to Tamil orthography until Arumukam Navalar's introduction of western-style punctuation in the mid-nineteenth century and E.V. Ramasami's new writing system (as required by the typewriter) in the mid-twentieth century.[100]

Even more significant for the formation of a modern literary culture than either interlingual texts or script reform were the related practices of translation and discursive prose; both were virtually absent before European contact but both became widespread by 1800. Although translations into Tamil had begun in the sixteenth century, translations from Tamil into European languages were achieved for the first time in the eighteenth century. Again, this change in translation activity is a direct consequence of the rise of Protestant printing and cultural domination in the Tamil country. We must remember that Beschi, like his predecessor and role model Nobili, was not primarily a translator; both preferred to compose their own texts in Tamil. However, if Nobili and Beschi wished to blend in with Tamil culture, adopting local customs and using the language from the inside out, rather than follow the earlier Jesuit practice of inserting transliterated European words into their texts, this harking back to the pre-colonial model of assimilation was only temporary; with the rise of Protestant influence from about 1750 onward, the translation model, in which other languages were brought into Tamil, never looked back. Even within

the Protestant camp, however, some were critical of the 'foreign words' and other impure imports into Tamil.

During his brief stay in Tranquebar at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Ziegenbalg translated a few Tamil texts of ethical aphorisms into German, but they remained unpublished until the twentieth century; at the tail end of the eighteenth century, a Tamil version of the *Bhagavatam* (a south Indian Sanskrit religious text) was published in a French translation in Paris, and extracts from the *Tirukkural* appeared in English in London. However, translation into Tamil, which was almost naturalised by 1800, had a far greater impact on local literary history. Some Jesuits may have realised that translation into Tamil was useful to their mission, but for Protestants it was an obligation and a soteriological strategy. The Jesuit experiments in the sixteenth century were dwarfed by the number of translations that were issued by the presses at Tranquebar and Vepery—the Old and New Testament, stories of Christ's life, Ziegenbalg's letters to the Hindus, theological tracts, Christian story literature and almanacs. By 1800 the number of Tamil Christians who, like the Catholic-turned-Protestant Rajanayakan, might have read or heard these translations had increased to more than 250,000.[101] Not every one of them would have been as deeply affected as Rajanayakan, but even those who only heard these translations read aloud would have encountered an externalised vision of their language, a foreign viewpoint operating inside the mother tongue.

Although the language of Christianity was becoming naturalised in Tamil (*tampiran* and *karttar* for 'the Lord'; *kiracai* for 'grace' and so on), these translations continued to generate vigorous debates about language use. Fabricius' 1772 revision of earlier translations of the New Testament (by Ziegenbalg and Shultze) brought praise from many Protestants, including Vedanayakam Sastri, but fierce criticism from de Melho, a Tamil Protestant in Ceylon. De Melho, who had published his own translation of the Bible in 1759, echoed Beschi's earlier condemnations when he stated that Fabricius' effort was error-prone, ungraceful and contained too many impure and foreign words. When the Lutherans responded with the essential Protestant tenet that

communicating to the common people was more important than linguistic purity, de Melho countered by saying that it was precisely the bastardised idiom of the east coast which ordinary Tamils would not understand. A second round of this language debate was initiated in the early nineteenth century by the publication of Rhenius' translations. His Bible of 1819, for example, was denounced by Vedanayakam Sastri as adulterated by 'mixing in ... all the Cutchery [pidgin] Tamil and gentoo [Telugu] words'.[102]

If translation stimulated thinking about 'which Tamil' to use, it also demonstrated new possibilities for prose; although written as commentaries to traditional Tamil poetry from at least as early as the thirteenth century AD and as histories in the seventeenth century, discursive prose began to emerge as an independent genre only during the eighteenth century.[103] Liturgical prose, from the Jesuit experiments in the sixteenth century to the Protestant tracts two centuries later, became a major genre of Tamil Christian literature, but other forms of prose during the eighteenth century had far greater impact on mainstream Tamil literary culture. One example of a more public prose is the mid-century diary of Anandaranga Pillai, interpreter and Diwan to the French Governor-General of Pondicherry; this diary, of twelve volumes written in colloquial Tamil, is the forerunner to modern autobiographies and journalistic prose.[104] Other examples, which led to the development of a public prose in Tamil, are the polemical essays produced during the print rivalry, although the Lutheran texts are unimpressive compared to those written by Beschi. Beschi's major prose essay was *Veta Vilakkam*, a long text of more than 250 printed pages, written with wit and verve. While it utilises complex sentences and employs literary allusions, as the passages quoted above demonstrate, it also achieves an intimacy with the reader that, according to one scholar, was entirely new in Tamil.[105] More widely read, because the Lutherans used it, was Beschi's guide to catechists, entitled *Vetiyar Olukkam*; some scholars consider this work, in which Beschi proceeds by supplying examples and evidence and then drawing conclusions, to be the first example of expository prose in Tamil.[106] Although these prose essays were not printed until the 1840s, they were widely circulated and read in Christian circles from their composition a century earlier.

A third type of prose writing introduced to Tamil during the eighteenth century was literary fiction; as a forerunner to the experimental novels of the late nineteenth century, this prose had a major impact on modern Tamil literary culture. The broad outlines of this development have been traced elsewhere, and here I want to emphasise one particular aspect, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter: that literary prose fiction was brought into Tamil through printed folklore.[107]

The 1793 translation of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a bilingual text with the English on the left hand side and the Tamil on the right of each page, represents a major development in Tamil prose writing. Freed from the liturgical weight of scripture, but impelled by the passion of the narrative, this translation achieved a storytelling technique unprecedented in Tamil. It soon proved to be a favourite among Tamils, and not only Christians; according to one missionary's report in the nineteenth century, it was often read aloud to large groups of people.[108] Other translations of European storytelling would be printed by the mid-nineteenth century (*Kalvi Eni*, or English tales by Mrs Trimmer in 1827; *L'aim des Enfans* in 1838), and some would come from European folklore (Aesop's tales in 1853), but the earliest example of Tamil literary prose fiction dates from the first half of the eighteenth century.[109] And it was based on folklore.

Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton'

Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton' (*Paramartta Kuruvin Katai*) is in fact a combination of Tamil oral tales and European story literature, plus the author's invention and imagination. Although Beschi had worked out some of the episodes years before in one of his prose works, he completed the story only in 1744 and appended it to his Latin–Tamil dictionary of that year.[110] 'Guru Simpleton' was not published until 1822, in London, but it was well known during the author's lifetime.[111] The bilingual manuscript was apparently first written by Beschi in Tamil and then translated by him into Latin; in printed Tamil editions, its eight chapters usually cover about forty pages (a Tamil word-count would give no indication of its length). While the Tamil narrative text

has often been translated and printed in English, Beschi's Latin Preface
has not; it appeared in Tamil translation in 1975 but never, as far as I
know, in English.[112]

In this Preface of 1744, Beschi reveals his intentions and his sources
for his famous literary tale, as well as his desire to print it. First, Beschi
explains that he wrote this tale, describing the adventures of a silly guru
and his band of dim-witted disciples, to provide some amusement for
hapless Jesuits condemned to the difficult task of learning Tamil. The
language used to narrate folktales, explains the learned Italian, would
supply useful illustrations of spoken Tamil for learners. But Beschi also
makes the point that this lapidary oral style is characteristic of the best
literary Tamil as well: 'Even when they wish to achieve a more elegant
and ornate style, they prefer to make use of concise phrases.' Beschi's
observation that pure Tamil is close to spoken Tamil is important to the
arguments developed later in this book: repeated by other influential
Europeans and Tamil scholars, it explains uses of printed folklore, and
underlies constructions of folklore and nationalism, in the second half
of the nineteenth century.

Next Beschi complains of the ignorance and indolence of scribes,
which make it 'impossible to find a single [written] page in common
Tamil which is free from orthographical errors'.[113] In order to dem-
onstrate correct spelling, Beschi also reveals that he wishes to put these
examples 'in print' (*typis*). But, as we know, the Jesuits had no press and
Beschi had already refused the Lutherans permission to print his *Catur
Akarati;* perhaps then this was a plea for a Jesuit patron, somewhere
outside India, to underwrite the publication of his dictionary and
folktale. Finally, Beschi explains that he has chosen a story 'which is
rather humorous and is well-known in these regions ... to this story we
have added others, that is, we have grafted other branches onto the
trunk'. In other words, 'Guru Simpleton' is an amalgam of local folktales
and European stories ('others') known to Beschi, who had acquired a
classical education at Ravenna and Bologna before arriving in India.

Although 'Guru Simpleton' is a literary tale in eight episodes, it is
not organised around a frame-story. Instead the author has linked these
episodes into a single, coherent, if rambling narrative, more like a novel

than its counterparts in world story literature such as *The Arabian Nights*, the *Pancatantra* or similar collections of Tamil tales. The linking of the episodes, through a recurring motif of a horse, is creative, but the true genius of Beschi's confection is that he has taken as his foundation a series of oral tales, still told today not only in south India but elsewhere in the subcontinent, and interwoven them with stories from Aesop and Juvenal, as well as numbskull tales familiar to those who know the Mad Men of Gotham or William Hogarth's prints.[114] This hybrid text has confused many scholars, some of whom claim that it is 'indisputably of European inspiration', while others are convinced that it is so Tamil that it must have been written, like Beschi's epic poem, by his Tamil pundit, Cuppiratipa Kavirayar.[115]

Six separate Indian folktales (and a possible seventh) are folded into Beschi's story of the bungling guru and his companions. Several are numbskull tales, including the story about the Guru's disciples who are unable to count their full number because the person counting cannot remember to include himself; in another episode the heroic disciples buy a pumpkin believing it to be a horse's egg from which they plan to hatch a herd of horses; and in yet another, a disciple cuts off the branch on which he is sitting.[116] In a fourth tale, the disciples play the literal fool, a popular theme in Indian folklore and elsewhere. When the Guru's hat falls off while riding on his horse, the disciples are told 'to pick up everything that falls', which soon includes animal droppings. They faithfully follow his instructions yet are scolded by the Guru, so the confused disciples sensibly ask him to write out a full list of exactly what they should pick up. Before long, the Guru himself falls off the horse, but he's not on the list! This particular folktale, reported only in India, had appeared sixteen years earlier in Beschi's *Veta Vilakkam*, where it exposed the stupidity of Lutherans and their leaders.[117] It was about that time, in the late 1720s, that Beschi himself actually fell off a horse and injured his arm so badly that he could not write for several months.[118]

The two remaining tales restore some balance to the adventures of the stupid disciples by demonstrations of cleverness. In one, a greedy man receives his comeuppance when his would-be-victims apply the

premise of his own faulty logic (an illustration of what would later be called 'deconstruction').[119] When the Guru falls off a hired bullock in the searing heat, the disciples place him in the shade of the bullock; the bullock-owner then asks for extra cash for the use of his animal as an umbrella, the disciples object and the local village leader adjudicates. Explaining his decision in favour of the Guru and his disciples, the leader describes how he was once similarly charged extra for smelling the rice he didn't eat; in payment, he simply placed his money bag under the greedy man's nose and said, 'The payment for eating is money; the price for smelling is smelling.' The disciples then pay the bullock-owner for the rented shade by holding their money bag in front of his face, saying, 'Here's some money-shade to pay for the bullock-shade.'

The most entertaining tale, and the longest, is embedded in the final chapter of 'Guru Simpleton'. This is an Indian variant of an international folktale, 'The Priest's Guest', reported from Turkey to Iceland.[120] In the European versions, a priest's servant, who has eaten the guest's chicken, uses her wits to get him to flee and to deceive the priest as well. Substitute a pious man for the priest, a wife for the servant, and her anger for her greed, and we have the Indian versions, in which the wife drives away a guest invited by her husband by inventing a story about a rice-beater (a long, heavy piece of wood). The tale is widely told in India, with versions reported in Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil;[121] it is a classic tale, appearing in the first collection of Indian folktales in English (in 1868) and also in the first English translation of Tamil folktales (in 1884). In every reported Indian version, a pious man performs a religious duty by feeding strangers, often sadhus, an act of charity which is among the highest of Hindu virtues and is often praised in Tamil folktales. But here, as is typical in folklore, we view this meritorious act from another angle, that of the wife, who after all must prepare and serve all those meals for which her husband gains religious merit. Told from her perspective, the folktale displays the wife's ingenuity, which matches the credulity of the invited guest.

In Beschi's telling, and in most Tamil versions, the husband sends a sadhu to his house for a meal, explaining that he will join him there after finishing some work. The wife greets the guest cordially enough

('Yet another one!' she mutters to herself), but then coolly plots her revenge: carefully placing a rice-beater in his view, she smears it with rice-powder, mumbles some words and prostrates herself to it three times. His curiosity aroused, the guest asks what puja she is performing, and she replies, 'It's a special puja,' and then, as if speaking to herself, but still audibly, adds, 'You'll find out what it is when my husband comes home.' 'What do you mean?' the guest asks. 'Well, I really shouldn't tell you this, but since you seem like a pious man I guess there's no harm in telling the truth,' the wife shrewdly says and then explains that in order to relieve the pains of his dead mother, who expired with a terrible backache, her husband uses the rice-beater to beat someone's back every day. After the frightened guest flees, the husband arrives and asks about the guest. 'Oh, him,' answers his wife. 'What kind of guests are you sending me these days? He wanted that old rice-beater of your mother's, but I said it's a family heirloom and I'd have to ask you. So he got angry and left.' 'You idiot! You refused a sadhu's request for an old rice-beater,' screams the husband, who picks up the rice-beater and runs after the guest. 'Stop! Stop! I've got something for you,' he shouts, but the guest, turning back to see the man charging at him with the weapon, realises that the wife told the truth and runs away even faster.

This tale of self-centred husband, clever wife, bogus puja and gullible sadhu must have interested Beschi; he uses it in the conclusion to 'Guru Simpleton' but, because it involves neither gurus nor disciples, he had to find a way to insert it into his narrative. Beschi's solution is itself clever. At the end of the tale, when Guru Simpleton is on his deathbed, he remembers a mantra that a Brahmin taught him: 'Asanam sitam; Jivanam nastam' ('Cold in the rear, death is near' in Crowquill's brilliant translation).[122] But it has no effect, so he orders his disciples to bury him. When, in desperation the disciples summon another man, a joker of sorts, to the Guru's bedside, he tells the ailing man that the Brahmin's mantra is a hoax, and boasts, 'I'll perform the "rice-beater puja" on that Brahmin and cure your illness.' When the Guru says that he had never heard of this puja and asks what it might be, the joker explains that his ignorance is not surprising since this mysterious ritual is 'found neither

in the six internal nor in the six external rituals of Saivism'. Finally, in order to explain the 'rice-beater puja', he tells the folktale of the exasperated wife's clever strategy to drive away the unwanted guest, which makes the Guru laugh out loud and gain temporary relief from his pain.

This tale-within-a-tale thus reiterates the theme of gullibility in 'Guru Simpleton'. In the tale narrated by the jester, the wife outwits her husband by playing on the credulity of the guest—the story she invents about the puja to the rice-beater is as absurd as it is effective—while in the tale told by Beschi, the naïve Guru likewise falls for a bogus mantra ('Asanam sitam; Jivanam nastam'). In Beschi's capable hands, the bogus ritual in the tale of the puja becomes an antidote for the mumbo-jumbo in the tale of Guru Simpleton. This may be an attack on Hindu superstition and stupid gurus, as many, beginning with Babington, the first translator of the tale, have claimed;[123] but if it is a satirical attack, it is launched from within since the story of the 'rice-beater puja' is a popular Indian folktale.

Recreating these Indian tales of dupes, charlatans and clever women, Beschi has written a piece of entertaining prose fiction, just as he intended. But I believe there is more to the story, since this Jesuit missionary was incapable of writing anything without some ethical implication. Is it possible, for instance, that this story of simpletons is a parable about spiritual wisdom, that the fool is wisest? Beschi's title, *paramartta kuru*, is intentionally ambiguous: *paramarttam* (from the Sanskrit) means 'excellent, or high aim', while *paramarttan* means 'a simpleton'. However, the entry in Winslow's 1862 dictionary, which may be taken from Beschi's story, notes that *paramarttam* also means 'spiritual knowledge which reveals the vanity and illusion of the world' and that the word is used ironically for 'simplicity'. Like the satire on Brahmins, however, the paradox of the wise fool is inherent in the folktales themselves, and perhaps Beschi merely highlighted this in his title.

Whatever moral Beschi intended for 'Guru Simpleton', it lies not in the borrowed oral tales but rather in the material he invented and introduced in order to weave the disparate episodes into a coherent

whole. And the thread that holds his tale together is the horse. Although the horse occurs in many of the independent tales, in the connecting material it becomes a symbol of futility: that which we most crave is that which will undo us. The horse, which the Guru so desperately needs—to fearlessly cross rivers, to avoid exhaustion when travelling in the withering heat and on dusty roads—proves to be an unending source of trouble. After failing to hatch a horse from a pumpkin, which they believe is a horse-egg, and to vivify a mud-horse, and after hiring an expensive bullock, the disciples finally succeed in buying an old, blind, lame, one-eared hag. Even for this defective mount, however, the Guru must pay road taxes and exorbitant prices for feed; soon they fall prey to another conman, who performs nonsense rituals and declares that the 'horse-troubles' will cease if its remaining ear is chopped off. Later the Guru falls from this horse into the water, which eventually leads to his death. Throughout the story, then, the horse brings the opposite of what its owner desires; a similar paradox is illustrated by the final image of the folktale of the rice-beater puja, in which the pious husband chases after his fleeing guest with the heavy beater in his hand: the more you try to gain something, the more unobtainable it becomes.

The Arabian horse, imported to this part of south India by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, soon became a status symbol for rajas, warriors and merchants; as the preferred conveyance for missionaries on their long pastoral travels, the horse was on Beschi's mind, too. As mentioned above, while riding one, he fell and injured his arm and could not write for several months. No greater calamity could befall a writer, no better image of futility than a writer who cannot write.

The authorial intentions of Beschi's text are still a topic of debate among Tamil scholars, but one thing is certain: 'Guru Simpleton' marks the beginning of literary prose fiction in Tamil. It was not published until 1822, in London, but when it was distributed and sold in Madras the following year, it became the first example of Tamil folklore in print; in its several Indian editions, starting in 1845 and continuing to the present day, the text has played an important role in the history of Tamil prose writing. Beschi's deliberate choice of folktales for his text illustrates the new attitudes toward Tamil literature that was fundamental

to the emerging literary culture of the eighteenth century. All the literary practices discussed in this chapter—bilingual grammars and interlingual dictionaries, script reform, translations and discursive prose—all of them contributed to this heightened awareness of language as a human artefact and of literary forms as a tool for cultural change. And these literary practices, in turn, were underpinned by print throughout the century; from the early bibles, to the grammars, to *Pilgrim's Progress*, print forced people to ask and to answer new questions of what kind of Tamil to write, what it should look like and what textual forms it might assume. For example, Beschi's scheme for script reform, first printed in his 1738 grammar, soon became standard orthography for Tamil. In addition, print enabled a wider distribution of the answers to these questions, conflicting answers which then ignited more debate about the purposes of language and literature. Far more than mute machine, the printing press was instrumental in the development of Tamil literary culture in the eighteenth century.

The last Tamil book printed in the eighteenth century was issued from the SPCK press at Vepery in 1799; *Tirucapai Carittiram* was a translation and revision of an earlier Portuguese history of the Christian church. This 1799 book contained a passage from Beschi's unpublished *Veta Vilakkam* of 1727 in which he discusses Nobili; through this printed book, therefore, many more people had access to the views Beschi had expressed in his handwritten text seven decades before. In the early part of the nineteenth century, when two influential writers, one British and the other a Tamil Catholic, quoted Beschi on Nobili, they did so not from Beschi's 1727 manuscript but from the extract printed in the 1799 book. While one cannot yet speak of a literary culture dominated by print, the activities of Beschi, the Lutherans and other Protestants during the eighteenth century made such a development only a matter of time. As noted earlier, by the end of the eighteenth century, 266 Tamil books were in print; by the end of the next century, the annual figure would reach nearly a thousand.[124]

3

PUNDITS, PUBLISHING AND PROTEST
1800–1850

Aliterary culture dominated by print, including commercial printing, could only develop in a location with the patronage to attract the necessary talent and technology, and with a population large and diverse enough to supply the necessary readers and users. So it was in Madras, rather than in Tranquebar or Tanjore, that a print-led literary culture emerged in the nineteenth century. Tranquebar was a small and isolated mission station, a relic of erstwhile Danish ambitions in India, and while the press there continued to print books right through the nineteenth century, the headquarters, including its prolific printing press, shifted to Madras, under the aegis of the London-based SPCK. Tanjore, on the other hand, had been the centre of Tamil literary culture under the medieval Cholas, and when it became so again under the Marathas (1675–1855), it did not remain untouched by missionaries. A Protestant mission, an extension of Tranquebar, was established there in the mid-eighteenth century; and its most famous ruler, Serfoji II (1777–1832) was personally tutored by a leading Protestant missionary and had a fascination for European literature and scientific inventions. In 1805 the Maharaja even installed a printing press in his palace, which then produced eight books in Marathi and Sanskrit, including a Marathi translation of Aesop, which would in turn be translated into Tamil some years later in Madras. But this *cul-de-sac* in the history of printing in south India was a raja's whim, and Tanjore could not compete with Madras as a centre for commerce or patronage or, eventually, literature.[1] A telling indication of that shift came in the 1820s, when a Tamil pundit

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left the Tanjore court to join the College of Fort St George in Madras.

This relocation of Tamil literary culture, from the courts and *matts* to Madras, had been building for some time. From its beginning in the early seventeenth century, the British East India Company at Fort St George had employed munshis and patronised poets and scholars, but the numbers were small and the contributions to Tamil literary culture negligible. By the end of the eighteenth century, the British conquest of south India turned Madras into a centre of patronage and trade; by then, Protestant missionaries had moved to the metropolis, bringing their printing activity with them. By 1800, then, the necessary patronage and technology and audience were in place, but the city awaited that other element necessary for a literary culture, dominated by print or not; still to arrive in Madras were the pundits with their text-making skills.

Pundits, munshis and other Indians had been involved in the history of Tamil printing, as assistants, editors and translators, since the sixteenth century. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, pundits began to play a new role in printing; no longer background figures, as in the missionary presses, the necessity of their endorsement and the value of their knowledge were now publicly acknowledged in privately printed books. When the colonial state entered this emerging world of Tamil print, the role of pundits would change further and gain even greater recognition; not only would they edit and authenticate texts, but they would create altogether new texts as well.

The nexus between pundits, printing and public patronage was cemented with the establishment of the College of Fort St George in 1812. By the 1820s the College employed several influential pundits, and others came from or settled in villages around Madras. Even then they would face impediments in the form of press controls and the persistent lack of presses and suitable fonts; but soon these pundits would extend their literary skills into publishing, and from that base into local politics. By the mid-nineteenth century, they would create a new literary culture, in which Indians produced and printed Indian texts for Indian audiences. They were behind the great majority of the

two hundred or so Tamil books published in Madras between 1800 and 1850.[2]

Established in 1639 as a small fort (about 100 yards by 100 yards, enclosing one main building and fifteen huts), by the mid-eighteenth century Madras had become the leading commercial and military out-post of the East India Company.[3] The campaigns against the French and their Indian allies, the wars against the rulers of Mysore and the lesser-known but equally bloody victories over local Tamil rulers (*palaiyakkarar*) left the British in undisputed control of the east coast and southern Deccan by the turn of the century. By 1800 nearly all the Tamil-speaking country (with the exception of the small kingdom of Pudukkottai, part of Travancore state and the French and Dutch settle-ments on the coast) was under direct British control; even the adminis-tration (primarily tax collection) of the Tanjore kingdom was ceded to the British in 1799, in return for a comfortable pension for the raja. This military expansion was soon underpinned by bringing local tax and court systems under Company control, and by abolishing local offices (like the powerful *kavalkarar*) and replacing them with officials appointed from Madras.[4] Overseeing this expanding machinery of tax collection, military control, judicial power and commercial activity, the British population of Madras increased to about 1500 by the year 1800, and the total population of the city grew to between 250,000 and 300,000.[5]

Madras was no longer a fort with a few huts, but, as Susan Neild has shown, it was still a 'city of villages'; she quotes a French visitor who wrote in 1804 that it was only 'a collection of country houses, of towns, and of villages, built around the Fort St George'.[6] That city of villages was nevertheless graced by new government buildings, including a banqueting hall, a clutch of temples, palaces and churches, mansions for the wealthy, broad thoroughfares and a 99-foot-tall lighthouse. The fort area, when viewed from the 'roads' (or harbour), was impressive:

The appearance of Madras from the roads is new and surprizing to the eyes of an Englishman. The sky clear and cloudless; the sea a deep green; the beach covered with a crowd of strange figures in singular dresses; their complexions

exhibiting every shade of colour to which the human race is subject—the pagodas, the temples, the fort, palaces, and public buildings, constructed, to all appearances, of Parian marble, all astonish the mind, and bring to one's recollection the fables of the Arabian Nights.[7]

James Wathen had not come to Madras to seek financial gain, spread Christianity or pursue a military career, but to accompany a ship's captain on a tour as an amateur artist; his book, describing a long tour of the East, is illustrated with coloured sketches and enlivened by vivid descriptions. Human density and diversity is what caught his eye in Madras:

The population of Madras, including the neighbouring villages, must be very great. Those villages are, at all times, so crowded with people, that they resemble the country towns in England during their fairs. The Black Town at Madras is inhabited by the aboriginal Hindoos, Portuguese, English, Chinese, Persians, Arabians, Armenians and natives of almost all the other Eastern countries.[8]

On the next page, Wathen wrote that the streets around Fort St George, called Black Town and later George Town,

displayed the hurry and bustle incidental to a large city, and acted by persons, who, in the eyes of a spectator accustomed only to the crowds of Cheapside or of Fleet Street, would have appeared to be in masquerade. Tall men with black faces, immense turbans, large ear-rings, white muslin robes, and red slippers, moving with a singular gait.[9]

This was Madras in the early 1800s, bristling with the groups who would use and support diverse forms of printing: the Company's civil servants and their Indian clerks, traders from all over India, lawyers and merchants of many nationalities, British and Indian soldiers; missionaries and mission schools were also increasing, while the pundits and public schools were on their way. Indeed, the materials printed in Madras during the last decade of the eighteenth century bear the imprint of these various groups: a book on silk manufacture on the Coromandel Coast, Hoyle's rules for whist, army regulations, the indispensable almanacs, an English–Hindustani dictionary and newspapers in English, and in Armenian.

Printing in Madras during the late eighteenth century was a combination of missionary, private and government ventures, an admixture which produced a small number of newspapers but considerable confusion over the exact number and locations of the presses. We know that Fort St George used the SPCK press at Vepery from its beginning in 1761; when SPCK received its own press from London in 1772, official government printing apparently moved inside the Fort. Armenian merchants, who numbered about five hundred in the early nineteenth century, probably supported the press that printed an Armenian schoolbook in 1772 and an Armenian-language newspaper (*Ardarar*) in 1794.[10] By 1785 the first English-language newspaper, the *Courier* (later *Madras Courier*), began as a weekly, carrying official government notices; it had its origins as a half-sheet advertising circulator and soon turned into a gossip column for the European community.[11] A rival English-language newspaper, *The Hircarrah*, began in 1793 but was short-lived. In 1795, however, the still-running *Madras Courier* was joined by two other newspapers, both with government support and better prospects: The *Madras Gazette*, owned by Robert Williams, the Company's Solicitor, and the *Government Gazette*, edited by John Goldingham, the Company's Astronomer and Engineer. The *Madras Gazette* was for a time printed at the Fort, while the *Government Gazette* was apparently first printed at Vepery and later, from about 1800, by the press at the Madras Male Asylum in Egmore; this latter press played a considerable role in the early history of printing in Madras.

The Madras Male Asylum was founded in 1789, a few years after a female asylum had been established, by Rev. Andrew Bell, Chaplain to the Government; Bell was an ardent reformer and wrote a book about his 'Madras system' of education in 1797, which became well known in England. The press at the orphanage was supervised by Rev. Richard Hall Kerr, Superintendent of the Government Press, who for many years wrote weekly tracts for missionaries (stationed outside British territory until 1813). The Eurasian orphans at the Asylum school (children of deceased officers, children of soldiers too poor to pay for private schooling and illegitimate children) were taught the art of printing; some of these pupils later found jobs with the growing number of presses

in the city, including the press set up at the College in 1812. During the 1830s, the Asylum press published its own newspaper, the *Madras Male Asylum Herald*, which became an important source of information about social and political issues.

After 1800, by which time the Armenian press had folded, the print industry in Madras consisted of two major printing presses—the long-standing missionary press at Vepery, printing in both English and Tamil, and the more recently established Male Asylum press.[12] Between them, they published a number of commercial circulars and four major newspapers in the first third of the century, although only one of those papers continued beyond 1840. The first to go, in 1836, was the *Madras Male Asylum Herald*; the *Madras Gazette* ceased to publish in 1837; and the *Madras Courier* ran until 1840.[13] The survivor was the *Government Gazette*, which in 1831 or 1832 became the *Fort St George Gazette*, the official organ of government, and continued to run until the 1870s. In the 1830s, these papers came out two or three times a week (the *Courier* was unusual with four issues) carrying government notices and official acts, a page of 'Home News' (London), plus a page of local news of concern to the European community, such as the arrival of a packet-ship from London or the despatch of a regiment to the northern Circars, or some other part of the now vast country under Company control. Prominent among the numerous adverts were notices of sales of Madeira wine, although lists of books for sale, by departing officials, also appeared. Despite this orientation to an English-reading public, these English-language newspapers did print official government notices in Tamil (and frequently in Telugu and rarely in Urdu in Perso-Arabic script), a practice which began in the 1790s and continued until the 1830s. Often, during this bi- and trilingual period, the Tamil (or Telugu) script filled an entire page, listing the names of debtors in the Carnatic financial scandal, for example, or translating a new regulation or announcing an official government sale of goods. After the 1830s, however, English-language newspapers no longer printed in Tamil.[14]

While these few presses appeared to meet the needs of the European population and wealthy Indian merchants, a literary culture led by print would not exist until Indians published books in Indian languages for Indian audiences. But that required three separate developments:

more printing presses and types; a relaxation of government controls over printing; and lastly, the involvement of traditional pundits in the new method of text production.

Access to printing was hindered by the fact that presses and suitable types were hard to come by, and as a consequence a minor black market in printing existed. The Madras Male Asylum press, for example, which printed the *Government Gazette*, had to guard against unauthorised use. A letter written in 1800 by F.W. Ellis, of the Board of Revenue, to Richard Kerr, Superintendent of Government Press (at the Asylum), proposed a scheme to obtain Telugu types but contained this stipulation: 'Printer forbidden to use them [types] on their own or any private account.'[15] Later, in 1816, the *Government Gazette* carried several official notices regarding the 'gratuitous use' of the Asylum press; and in the 1830s, the Asylum's own *Herald* frequently published government announcements specifying the names of the officials authorised to use the press. In these early years, the limited extent of printing in Madras belied its perceived value.

A limited supply of good types also impeded printing in Tamil and Telugu in Madras in the early years of the nineteenth century.[16] The missionary press at Vepery was well supplied with types from Halle and London, but others had to do with those cut in Madras, which were hard to find and often of inferior quality. In a second letter to Kerr in 1800, Ellis complained that these locally cut types lasted only twelve to fourteen months, largely because the artisans were not properly trained; as a solution, Ellis proposed employing local goldsmiths as 'servants to the Government Press', until artisans could be trained to cut proper types and operate the presses. Fort St George agreed to his plan, which took thirteen months to complete and cost a tidy sum of 10,004 rupees.[17] These Telugu types were the first to be cut in India and were most likely those used by the *Government Gazette* to print its notices in Telugu.[18] Two aspects of this exchange are noteworthy: first, improvements in Telugu printing led to the same in Tamil; second, the improvements were achieved through the persistence and imagination of F.W. Ellis, who later changed the course of Tamil literary history through his research and his establishment of the College of Fort St George.

Government control over printing was another impediment to

Indian access to the new technology, but this restriction has often been exaggerated and is widely misunderstood. It is commonly accepted, for instance, that until Metcalfe's Minute in 1835 Indians were prohibited by law from owning or operating a printing press; no such law, however, ever existed. Indian access to printing was not prohibited by law, but it was restricted through licensing. Company censorship, largely an extension of government policy in England, was aimed primarily at the rebellious English-language, European-owned press in Calcutta, and to a lesser extent in Bombay, and less still in Madras; in 1799, for example, scurrilous attacks on the Prince of Wales by the *Indian Herald* in Calcutta led to a crackdown.[19] Until the 1820s, this official censorship was limited to the proscription of libellous attacks on government officials and of missionary denunciations of Indian religions. In 1823, however, John Adam, Governor-General of Bengal, issued an order (the Adam Act) requiring any publisher or printer to obtain a licence, and a similar act was soon passed in Bombay.[20] No such act was issued in Madras, where the government controlled the press and Indian ownership of it through a more informal system of licensing. When explaining the necessity of the new act, Metcalfe himself said that it simply recognised the fact that in Madras there was no press law.[21]

Although newspapers in Madras in the early nineteenth century, unlike those in Calcutta, were not radical and rarely even polemical, Fort St George believed it had good reason to keep the handcuffs on. Governor-General Barlow (1807–13), for instance, had been attacked by a slew of 'anonymous letters and circulars'.[22] It was not just libel, however, that the government wished to control. In 1809, the government prevented publication of a story about the infamous 'Carnatic claims case' in the *Government Gazette;* and a decade later both the *Gazette* and *Courier* were denied permission to reprint a story from the *Britain Review* in London about a 'Baptismal controversy'.[23] As late as 1834, the *Fort St George Gazette*, the official government paper, was itself twice prosecuted for libel.[24] The government sometimes also exercised prior restraint, and stories appeared with a large number of asterisks and the notice: 'expunged by the Chief Secretary'.[25]

While censorship by licensing was directed largely against the

English-language press, it was also a convenient tool for suppressing Indian public opinion. This objective was made explicit by Thomas Munro, the most progressive and influential Governor of Madras (1820–7) in the first half of the nineteenth century. In his Minute on the dangers of a free press in India, written in 1822, not long after the 'Vellore Mutiny' had shattered British complacency in the Madras Presidency, and during the run-up to the Adam Act, Munro put his case succinctly: 'A free press and the dominion of strangers are ... quite incompatible.'[26] He went on to argue that Indians, especially soldiers who were in close contact with Europeans, would use a free press to stage a rebellion: the 'freedom of the press', explained the Governor, would not spread 'useful knowledge among the people' but would instead 'generate unsubordination, insurrection, and anarchy ... and to stimulate them to expel the strangers who rule over them and to establish a national government'.[27] Munro was nothing if not prescient.

Concerned that a free press would diminish the authority of the government among Indians, Munro must also have known that Indians were already using the press. Although it is often believed that Indians did not publish newspapers or print books before 1835, this is far from true. In 1818 at the Serampore press, a Bengali printed a Bengali newspaper *Samachar Darpan* (or *Bengal Gazette*), and a Gujarati newspaper, *Bombay Samachar*, began in 1822; these were more or less 'English' papers appearing in Indian languages, but in the 1820s other Bengali papers and journals appeared, one edited by Rammohun Roy, which might be called the first Indian papers.[28] In Madras, at least seven Indian-owned presses published in Tamil before 1835, the first being Attiniyam ant Teli Niyus Piras (Athenaeum [?] and Daily News Press), which also published a pamphlet in 1809.[29] How these presses were permitted to publish papers and books at this time is uncertain. In the absence of formal legislation in Madras, it appears that individuals made ad hoc petitions to government to obtain official permission to operate a printing press. In the first decades of the century, Tamils (and Telugus) often wrote to Fort St George requesting permission to publish a newspaper or book, but their requests were seldom approved; sometimes Indians appear to have published books without any prior

approval. In similar petitions, Europeans were often, although not always, successful.

All this would change with the 1835 Act, but first we will look more closely at printing in Madras before that misunderstood watershed. Although the very first Tamil book to be published in Madras by Tamils and for Tamils appears to be a pamphlet of religious poetry issued in 1809, we know a good deal more about the next two such books: *Tamil Vilakkam*, a grammar published in 1811; and an edition of the *Tirukkural* published in 1812.[30] Although these two early books were produced by Indians, they were written and printed for different audiences: the grammar was intended for a European audience, and the *Tirukkural* for a Tamil audience. The author of the grammar sought official patronage, was refused but gained permission to print his work privately, while the editors of the *Tirukkural* published their text without apparently making any petition. As such, these pioneering publications illustrate different paths to patronage and book production in early nineteenth-century Madras.

Tamil Vilakkam and the golden snuff box

Although its intended readership was European, *Tamil Vilakkam* was one of the first Tamil books to be authored and printed by an Indian in Madras. Published in 1811, just before the establishment of the College of Fort St George, it illustrates, at times humorously, the barriers faced by Indians who wished to publish their work and the strategies they employed to circumvent them in the early years of the century. Prior to that time, from at least the late eighteenth century, Fort St George had extended its patronage to Indians in order to encourage the preparation of works that would be useful to its employees, who were required to learn a local language. Before 1813, however, when the College published an abbreviated Tamil grammar in prose (and reissued Beschi's grammar in Latin), no such work had been printed; poets and pundits had received honours and payments, but not official sanction to publish a book. A few years before the College printed its first book, however, Subbaraya Mutaliyar tried to make publishing history with *Tamil Vilakkam*.

Subbaraya Mutaliyar, who was probably Telugu, was born in Tiru-verkatu, a village outside Madras, in the late eighteenth century; he undoubtedly knew of Muttiah Mutaliyar (b. 1761), also from Tiru-verkatu, who had attracted the attention of Governor Hobart in the 1790s.[31] When Subbaraya Mutaliyar entered government employment is not known, but by 1810 he had gained the high post (for an Indian at that time) of Native Registrar to the Zillah Court in Chingleput; he had also written a Tamil grammar in English. As Native Registrar, he seems to have made the acquaintance of George Read, a Judge in the Circuit Court, who advised him to send his grammar to the official Tamil Translator to Government. With the number of junior civil servants in Madras increasing every year, Tamil grammars were much in demand; but those available in print were Beschi's Latin–Tamil work of 1738, practically a collector's item by this time, and an almost unreadable English translation of it published in 1806. A better Tamil grammar was desirable, but Subbaraya's was not to be it.

In May 1810, Subbaraya Mutaliyar sent his manuscript to the Chief Secretary of the Government, asking that they publish it. Almost a year later, the Tamil Translator to Government rejected it, explaining that although it was graced by endorsements from pundits praising it as 'concise and correct', it was 'not very concise and in several instances not very correct'.[32] Even the author's name, the Translator pointed out, was misspelt on the title page, which also contained a grammatical error. He was probably unimpressed as well by the then-title of the manuscript: 'Orthography, analogy, syntax, poetry and rhetoric, according to the Idiom of axiomatic Tamal [sic]';[33] the author's assertion, in his Preface to the grammar, 'that the shanscrit is the mother of the Tamel language' would certainly not have recommended him to Orientalists at the College, especially F.W. Ellis, who was already developing another genealogy for the language. By a not very extraordinary coincidence, a Telugu grammar was also rejected by Fort St George in 1811 because it, too, failed to recognise the independence of Dravidian languages.[34]

Although Subbaraya Mutaliyar was clearly not a pundit or scholar of any competence, his manuscript demonstrated an awareness of its potential readers. The ninety-seven printed pages were bilingual, Tamil

on the left, English on the right, and set out in an easy question-and-answer format. He also explained in his Preface that whereas the 'Grammars hitherto composed contained Verses which could not be understood without the assistance of a very learned man or minister [pundit] ... the following work is written in plain prose not in Verse'. Prose grammars, as Beschi had demonstrated in the previous century, were required by foreigner learners, but unfortunately the author of *Tamil Vilakkam* did not follow Beschi's scheme for orthography, which was already becoming popular; Subbaraya Mutaliyar's grammar did not use dots over letters, or distinguish long 'e' or long 'o', which made reading difficult. On the other hand, the author did advocate the adoption of a new number system, a bizarre combination of the traditional Tamil system and roman numerals, which he hoped would bridge the gap between them.

Undaunted by the rejection of his manuscript, Subbaraya Mutaliyar asked Governor Barlow for permission to dedicate the work to him; no response is recorded, but when the book was eventually published the list of subscribers included the name of Lord Bentinck, whom Barlow had succeeded. The author managed to make the best of a pretty bad situation by claiming in his Preface that the government 'had no objection to my printing it at my own expense'. This is certainly true, for the grammar was printed at Madras in 1811, although no press is mentioned on the title page or in any surviving record.

This brief summary of the publication history of *Tamil Vilakkam* clarifies some long-standing confusion concerning early Tamil printing. Although several scholars have noted this book as a milestone in the history of Tamil literature, no one appears to have actually seen a copy (although copies have been held at SOAS and the British Library for many years), a situation which has led some to assume that it was printed as the result of a government competition for a suitable grammar.[35] In fact, no such competition took place in Madras at that time; and in any case, *Tamil Vilakkam* was printed not through government patronage but despite the denial of it. Finally, the first book (or pamphlet) published by an Indian in Madras, with or without government permission, was

not *Tamil Vilakkam* in 1811, but *Karaikkal Ammaiyar Tivya Carittira Kirttanai* in 1809.

The mystery of the publisher/printer of the book, however, remains. Denied publication at government expense (presumably it would have been printed at the Madras Male Asylum Press), *Tamil Vilakkam* eventually found a printer, but where? The two copies I consulted, at SOAS and at the British Library, do not mention a publisher—only the location (Cennai) and the year; and this is also true with the author's other books. Nevertheless, we can make an educated guess. Given the limited number of presses in existence in Madras at the time, and extrapolating from the information provided by contemporary books printed there, it is likely that this historic book was printed by Nanappirakaca Pillai. He was the publisher of another early book printed by an Indian in Madras, the *Tirukkural* of 1812, and he was also the owner of the Commercial Press, which published the second edition of *Tamil Vilakkam* in 1817. These two facts suggest that the 1811 edition of *Tamil Vilakkam* was published by him as well.

In addition to his grammar, Subbaraya Mutaliyar wrote two more books in Tamil, which, like *Tamil Vilakkam*, were published in Madras without a publisher indicated on the title page. Subbaraya Mutaliyar's book of aphorisms advising correct conduct 'for Hindus' (*Manita Tolil Vilakkam*) appeared in 1812; and almost two decades later he published a collection of essays giving practical information on everything from the penal system to calculating interest on loans (*Vinnapattiram*, 1831). Subbaraya Mutaliyar also refers to his autobiography in a letter in 1816, but it appears not to have been published.[36]

Despite setbacks, Subbaraya Mutaliyar did gain some satisfaction in the end. His grammar and his book of aphorisms were sent from Madras (probably by his friend, Judge George Read) to the East India Company in London and deposited in their library, with the suggestion that if the Company wished 'to make any return to him, it would be preserved with great pride in his family and stimulate them to further exertions'.[37] After ascertaining, by official correspondence from Fort St George, that this native author was a man of good character, the

Company in London decided to give Subbaraya Mutaliyar a gold snuff box; this gift was dispatched to Madras aboard the *Prince Regent* and presented to him in 1817, bearing an inscription that the Honourable East India Company acknowledged the author's 'endeavours to promote a knowledge of the Tamel Language among their Servants'. When Subbaraya Mutaliyar wrote to Fort St George requesting that they print his collection of aphorisms and his autobiography, he found occasion to mention this token of affection from the Company; that honour did not sway the Tamil Translator to Government, however, who continued to reject his manuscripts. The last we hear of Subbaraya Mutaliyar is in 1834: when the government advertised an old set of Persian types for sale for 975 rupees, he offered 500 and was turned down.

The story of Subbaraya Mutaliyar's books illustrates more than just the difficulty of gaining official government patronage in these early years, before the establishment of the College of Fort St George. It also shows that patronage was conferred in various shades and from more than one source. First, although his books did not receive official government patronage, they did gain tacit approval, since all three were eventually published. In fact, *Tamil Vilakkam* gained more than a fig leaf of recognition from the British: not only a gold snuff box, and its inscription of praise, but also an impressive list of British subscribers. Twenty-two British names, headed by Lord William Bentinck, later Governor-General, are listed as subscribers, for a total of fifty-two copies of the book. British patronage was the prime target, but Indian patronage was also important to Subbaraya Mutaliyar; a second list of subscribers in *Tamil Vilakkam* comprises forty-six Indian names (mostly Mutaliyars), including local zamindars and small rajas, who pledged themselves to a total of seventy-four copies. Finally, the book was endorsed by Tamil pundits who signed a statement (the traditional *carru kavi*) that since the book was 'concise and correct, they had not the least objection to the publication'. This faint praise was followed by a series of conventional verses praising the author's knowledge of Tamil and English. That knowledge was demonstrably lacking in both languages, however, and one wonders how closely the pundits examined the manuscript before

endorsing it. One of the pundits who endorsed *Tamil Vilakkam*, Sirkali Vatukanatha Pandaram, also played a vital role in a second early book.

The 1812 *Tirukkural*

Almost as soon as it was published, *Tamil Vilakkam* passed into obscurity; even its second, again self-financed, edition in 1817 was not used by Europeans or Tamils, both of whom relied on better, older grammars. No greater contrast could exist between this book and the next book to be printed by an Indian in Madras: the *Tirukkural*, which is the best-known text of Tamil literature. Its printing in 1812 was not a cause but an indication of its extraordinary prominence among both the general Tamil population and pundits. In addition, this second historic publication demonstrates another model for a printed book in the nineteenth century—not by government or missionary presses and not directed toward Europeans—but printed by an Indian-owned press, without government approval, for a Tamil audience.

The decision to print the *Tirukkural* in 1812 is hardly surprising, given that this is the most widely used and quoted text produced in twenty centuries of Tamil literary history; its ethical maxims are a per-fect balance between poetic concision and popular wisdom. Neither Saiva nor Vaisnava, but probably Jain in inspiration, its legendary author, Valluvar, is a cultural hero for Tamils; he is said to have been an Untouchable who humbled brahminical pride and purified Tamil of Sanskritic influences, and now his statue stands alongside that of the other literary luminaries (Ilango, Kampan, Auvaiyar, Beschi and Pope) on the seafront in Madras. The legend of the downtrodden sage who triumphed over priestly superstition also endeared Valluvar to many missionaries, who embraced his life and text as the acceptable face of Hinduism, a best-case alternative to the ritual-ridden brahminism they condemned.

The 1812 *Tirukkural* also highlights the increasing role of pundits in the printing of books in Madras in the early years of the century; pundits had from the very beginning assisted in the printing of Tamil

books, working with Jesuit and then Protestant missionaries and later British civil servants. In the first third of the nineteenth century, however, they assumed a more essential and visible role, as editors and authors and, eventually, as commercial publishers. This first publication of the *Tirukkural* and its aftermath also suggests that we need to revise our view of Tamil literary history in the nineteenth century. While it is known that a few classical texts were published in the 1840s, it is generally believed that the revival of Tamil classical literature began only in the 1880s. The 1812 *Tirukkural*, followed by two more editions and the publication of at least twelve other major texts in the 1830s, however, indicates that the so-called Tamil renaissance began half a century earlier.

Nevertheless, because this 1812 book was printed privately, and without overtures to government, we know precious little about its history; in fact, the very existence of this publication has only recently been brought to scholarly notice, and is still not widely known.[38] Although it is referred to as the *Tirukkural*, the publication includes three texts: *Tirukkural*, a collection of moral verses attributed to Valluvar and dated about AD 500; *Nalatiyar*, a similar collection, but a century or so later and without attribution; and *Tiruvalluvamalai*, a 'garland' of verses in praise of Valluvar, probably compiled in the early medieval period. These three texts, without commentary, were published, the title page tells us, 'in Cennaippattinam [Madras] of the Tontaimantalam region, by Nanappirakaca Pillai, son of Malaiya Pillai of Tanjore, [at the] Maca Tinacaritai Press [Monthly News Press] in 1812 [in Tamil numerals]'. Nanappirakaca Pillai, as already mentioned, was the owner of the press that printed the second edition of Subbaraya Mutaliyar's grammar and he may have printed the first edition as well. His name and the books he later printed, an 1817 book by Muttusami Pillai, for example, also suggest that he was a Christian, and probably a Catholic. The name of the press (Maca Tinacaritai), which means 'Monthly News', has been taken by one scholar to prove that a Tamil journal by that name must have been in print at the time, which would make it the first Tamil periodical, and the first in any Indian language.[39] In the absence of a copy of an issue of that journal, or even a reference to one

in the historical record, however, the existence of such a Tamil journal remains conjecture.

From the 1812 book itself, however, and from a palm-leaf copy of it made after it was printed, we know something about both the motives of the pundits who produced it and their working methods. The first goal of the book, as announced on the title page, was to print a 'clean copy, free of errors', of this all-important Tamil text. Inside the book, the Tamil Preface (titled *varalaru* or 'history') explains that 'because of the absence of printing in this country all the fine Tamil texts composed by learned scholars have been handwritten, causing letters to be added, altered and lost, words lost, meanings shift and the errors increase with every new copy. ... Therefore, because we wish to print and distribute a clear, proper text, this *Tirukkural*, in three parts, by the divinely-inspired Tiruvalluvar, and the Nalati, a moral [*niti*] text composed by sages, are printed here.' As this reveals, even at this early date, Tamil pundits were anxious to utilise the new technology to perfect their text-making skills. The three printed texts, however, were not the final goal but, as the pundit-editors explained, only 'instruments' for writing commentaries on them.

Typically for traditional texts, this 1812 book was produced not by one man but by a network of pundits. As described in the Preface, 'learned pundits studied various clean manuscripts belonging to old scholarly families in the southern districts' and then arrived at a 'text free from error'. This preparation of a correct manuscript in Tirunelveli and Alvartirunagari was overseen by Ampalavana Kavirayar, who sent it to Madras (but to whom is not mentioned); from there it went to Ampalavana Tampiran, head pundit at the famous Tiruvavatuturai *matt*, near Tanjore, and to Cirkali Vatukanatha Pandaram. These two men checked the manuscript and put their seal of approval on it; this final, authenticated manuscript was then printed in Madras. As a result of this collaboration, the editors were confident that they had been able 'to arrive at a text containing not one missing or one extra letter or word'. The Preface, signed by Tirunelveli Ampalavana Kavirayar, concludes: 'Therefore, not even an iota of doubt can exist about this

text.' Even when the reverse process took place and palm-leaf copies were made from the printed book, a similar sequence of pundits verified their accuracy.[40]

A network of at least three Tamil pundits, in three different regions, sent the manuscript back and forth, checking and revising until the final text was agreed. Here is yet another confirmation that early printed books did not produce new knowledge but merely assisted old pundit practices: the method of checking and team-working was traditional and so was the goal of an authentic text. But there was something new: from now on, that textual authenticity would not rely solely on the reputation of the pundit. After 1812, printing would also be used by pundits as an 'instrument' to ensure authenticity. Having harnessed their traditional text-making skills to the new technology, pundits in Madras would soon take an even bigger step and become independent publishers themselves. Before that, however, many pundits would learn much more about the process of producing printed books when government patronage for Tamil literature was institutionalised at the College of Fort St George. At the College pundits did not just edit and prepare manuscripts for publication—though that was an important task—they also created altogether new texts, which is why that institution is so central to the history of printing in nineteenth-century Madras.

The College of Fort St George

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, newly-arrived British civil servants (mostly young 'Writers') were required to learn Indian languages. At Calcutta, the College of Fort William was set up for this purpose in 1800 and soon began to print grammars, dictionaries, and prose works; by 1830, the press there had printed 212,000 items in forty different languages.[41] After three years in Calcutta, studying one or more classical or modern Indian languages (including Tamil and Telugu) and law, the new recruits were sent out to their posts in one of the three Presidencies. Before long, however, objections were raised—London wanted more control and feared that the men, some as young

as fifteen, might be corrupted by India. In 1806 it was agreed that the first two years of training were to be held in England, at the East India College set up at Haileybury, and only the last year at Calcutta.[42] Before long, however, the scheme was changed again, and the young men destined for posts in the Madras Presidency were sent directly to Madras for their final year of training, which led to the establishment of the College of Fort St George in 1812.

Prior to that, the linguistic efforts of the Company's employees in the Madras Presidency were overseen by the 'Committee for the Improvement of the Study of the Native Languages by the Junior Civil Servants'. Having made private arrangements, no doubt assisted by this Committee, the new arrivals in Madras then presented themselves for examination; a pass was worth 1000 star pagodas. However, as Thomas Trautmann explains, since most new civil servants had started on Persian and/or Hindustani at Haileybury, they tended to continue with these languages in Madras, even though they were of limited use in south India.[43] As early as 1750 the Company had exhorted its employees 'not only to learn the Persick but also the other languages of the country', but to little apparent effect.[44] Thus the College of Fort St George was set up with the express purpose of redirecting the language learning of new arrivals away from 'Hindusthani and Persian to the Vernaculars of the Peninsula'.[45] First established within the fort complex, the College soon acquired a purpose-built building, where its impressive library was also housed, near Egmore in 1827; from that location, it continued to teach languages and law until it was superseded by Madras University in 1854.

This reorientation to south Indian languages was built into the College regulations, which stipulated that civil servants must first pass an examination (and collect their reward of 1000 star pagodas) in either Tamil, Telugu, Kannada or Malayalam;[46] only then could a student get a further financial award for the study of Sanskrit, Persian, Hindustani or Arabic. Although the goal was to redirect study away from this second group of languages, the College explained that 'it was not the aim to neglect them altogether' since they were used in the lawcourts and some official communications.[47] During its first two decades, the

number of British civil servants who sat for any one examination at the College was about twenty, most of whom studied either Tamil or Telugu as a first language, while Persian was the favourite second language. These few young men would have listened closely when Governor Munro, recently arrived from London, visited the College during an examination and said to them that he had come 'to impress on your minds the importance which the Government attaches to the acquirement by you of a knowledge of the native languages'.[48]

At its inception in 1812, teaching at the College was placed in the hands of three Head Masters: Cittampala Tecikar for Tamil; Pattabhi Ramiah Sastry for Telugu and Sanskrit; the Persian and Hindustani post was vacant, but a munshi was later brought from the library at the College of Fort William.[49] Posts in both Arabic and Marathi were also added later. These Head Masters, or Head Pundits, were assisted by ten Native Teachers, who actually taught the British civil servants on a one-to-one basis, and by fifteen Native Students, who were to be trained to become Native Teachers; the College also supervised the training of munshis and prepared Indians to become pleaders or 'law officers'. According to the Rules and Regulations of the College, however, only 'respectable natives' were to be admitted as students;[50] and the dozen or so names of native students (all Brahmins, Mutaliyars and Pillais) mentioned in public documents confirm that this was the case.[51] Later in 1834, when a Paraiyar, an Untouchable, applied for admission, the College Board wrote to the government and asked for advice, pointing out that, although government policy stated that there should be no exclusion for 'East Indians', the Head Masters would resent a low-caste student. In the end, after Fort St George wrote to Calcutta to enquire about practice there, the application was rejected.[52]

The College was governed by a Board, led by Francis Whyte Ellis, who was almost single-handedly responsible for the conception of the College, its curriculum and its purpose.[53] Arriving in Madras in 1796 as a Writer, Ellis soon became President of the Revenue Board, then Collector of Madras and eventually President of the College Board. In addition to his public work, he wrote three influential essays on the system of landownership and taxation, on south Indian law and on a

'fake Veda', plus a commentary on the *Tirukkural* accompanied by a partial translation;[54] he also wrote a long, magisterial and unpublished essay on Tamil language and literature.[55] But Ellis made his permanent mark when he demonstrated the existence of a separate family of Dravidian languages in a 'Note to the Introduction' to a Telugu grammar printed at the College in 1816.[56] Ellis suffered a premature death in 1819, the unfortunate result of taking the wrong medicine for an illness.[57]

Ellis was also the driving force behind the College Press and its impressive record of publications in its first years. In fact, even before the College actually opened its doors, its supporters wrote to government requesting that a press be placed under its control immediately because the College had ambitious plans to print books.[58] Ellis, the letter informed government, would supply the College with a printing press and a set of Tamil types (how it is not said), while the Superintendent of Government Press at the Asylum Press in Egmore had agreed to supply the ink, the workers (boys at the orphanage) and Telugu types (which, as mentioned above, Ellis had originally obtained for the government in 1800). Printing paper, which was almost as rare as the types, would come from government, who would request it from London; the College also planned to purchase a set of English types, to arrive by ship from England, for 2100 pagodas. All this was sanctioned, but before the ship arrived, Ellis, always the pragmatist, searched around for local materials and managed to buy a set of English types for 658 pagodas, considered a 'moderate price in the Madras market', as well as printing ink for 223 pagodas. Later he also obtained Persian types from Calcutta, but they were too 'intricate' for the boys from the Asylum who operated the College Press.[59]

With this equipment and manpower, bought and borrowed, imported and local, the College Press went quickly into operation and eventually, after two decades of operation, had published a total of twenty-seven books. Fourteen of these were in Tamil or translated into Tamil; the first was, appropriately enough, Beschi's grammar of common Tamil (in Latin), that warhorse which had first been printed by the Lutherans in 1738.

TAMIL BOOKS PRINTED AT THE COLLEGE PRESS, FORT ST GEORGE

Date	Title	Author/Editor
1813	*Kotum Tamil* (reprint of 1738 Tranquebar edition of Beschi's grammar)	
1813	*Ilakkana Curukkam* (grammar primer in prose)	Cittampala Tecikar
1815	*Ramayanam Uttarakantam* (from Sanskrit)	Cittampala Tecikar, trans.
1816 (?)	*Tirukkural*	F.W. Ellis, trans.
1820	*Ilakkana vinavitai* (grammar primer in prose)	Tantavaraya Mutaliyar
1822	*A grammar of the High Dialect of the Tamil Language* (Beschi)	B.G. Babington, trans.
1824	*Catur-akarati* (Beschi's dictionary)	Tantavaraya Mutaliyar and Ramacandra Kavirayar, eds
1826	*Pancatantira Katai* (from Marathi)	Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, trans.
1826	*Katamancari* (folktales)	Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, ed.
1826	*Taruma Nul* (from Sanskrit, *Smriti Candrica*)	Kantacuvami Pulavar, ed. and trans.
1826	*Tamil Ariccuvati* (Sanskrit primer)	Henry Harkness and Visvambra Sastri
1827	*Kalvi Eni* (Mrs Trimmer's tales)	Camiyappa Mutaliyar and Kantaami Pulavar, trans.
1828	*Ilakkana Vinavitai* (rev. of 1820 edition)	Tantavaraya Mutaliyar
1833	*Katacintamani* (folktales)	Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, ed.

In addition to these Tamil books, the College also published five Telugu books: the tales of Vikkirama; a translation of the *Pancatantra*; a dictionary (with Ellis' Dravidian proof) and two grammars. They also printed two books in Arabic (a law book and a grammar), two in Hindustani (a dictionary and a translation of Persian tales), and one each in Kannada (a grammar), and in Malayalam (a grammar-dictionary) and English (a geography textbook). Finally, in a quite different category, in 1817 the College published a Tamil–Telugu almanac, prepared by Subbramaniya Joshiyer, one of the native students.[60] The College Press issued its last publication in the early 1830s, although the College Board itself was disbanded much later when its tasks were assumed by a Board of Examiners for the Madras University.

The College Press also acted as a bookseller and distributor, and regularly placed advertisements in the *Government Gazette*; during the 1830s their list of books for sale stretched to more than forty titles, including a few printed elsewhere (notably Robert Anderson's Tamil grammar in 1821 and Babington's translation of Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton' in 1822, both printed in London). With print-runs of either five hundred or a thousand, and only some bought by subscription, and a few (usually fifty) copies sent to government offices and libraries in India and England, many copies of most books remained unsold. They were not inexpensive; in 1830, for example, a bound edition of Beschi's grammar of common Tamil sold for five rupees.[61]

The manuscripts rejected by the College are also instructive. In 1815 a Tamil hymnal by Rev. Rottler was turned down because it was 'scarcely intelligible ... and a work of a nature altogether foreign to the College';[62] the ban on missionary work in British India had only been lifted a few years before and the government, especially the College with Ellis at its head, still wished to distance itself from Christianity. The College also refused to reprint an English grammar with Tamil translation, which had already been published by Nanappirakaca Mutaliyar at his own expense, because the translations were judged to be 'incorrect' and the language 'too high';[63] however, the College did earlier agree to purchase fifty copies of this author's (again) self-financed

publication of his Tamil translation of part of *The Arabian Nights*.[64]
These negative assessments appear to have been justified, although the
College Board made at least one error of judgement. When, in 1816,
they reviewed a manuscript on castes and customs in south India, they
recommended considerable revision; what they did not know was that
another copy, sent to London ten years earlier, was already in press and
was to be printed that same year. That book was Abbe J.A. Dubois'
Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies, which soon became an Oriental
classic.[65]

Pundits at the College

With the institutionalisation of government patronage at the College
in 1812, pundits would succeed where Subbaraya Mutaliyar had failed
only a year before. Of the fourteen Tamil books printed by the College,
eleven were either edited or written by pundits at the college, who also
assisted in Ellis' translation of the *Tirukkural* and Babington's translation
of Beschi's high grammar; the Telugu books printed at the College were
also produced by pundits. With this scholarly authority, the College
press was the centre of Tamil publishing in Madras, but not the totality
of it: some College pundits published with other presses, especially
the missionary press at Vepery, while pundits outside the College also
published their works at the College. Patronage from the government
was substantial: the standard payment for a book, edited or translated
or authored, was 1000 star pagodas, at a time when the annual salary
of a Government Translator was 600 pagodas. The Tamil pundits at the
College were never numerous—a Head Pundit and two or three Native
Teachers at any one time—but they represented a new literary elite in
the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Tamil pundits came to the College from a variety of backgrounds.
Many had been pundits at the courts at Tanjore or Madurai, which by
the early nineteenth century were dwindling in resources and prestige;
others came from the many *matts*, especially that at Tiruvavatuturai,
which continued to train traditional scholars throughout the century.
Several prominent pundits also came from Pondicherry, which pre-

dated Madras as a centre of collaborative European–Tamil scholarship. A few pundits, famously Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, came directly from established families of scholars, while another well-known figure, Ramanuja Kavirayar, had reportedly been a soldier in the Company's army. After the College was disbanded in the 1850s, several pundits were given good positions in the judicial system, but many more went on to teach at colleges: at Presidency College, the successor to the College; at Paccaiyappa's College, successor to a school by the same name and supported by a Hindu philanthropist's trust; and at Kumbakonam College (est. 1869), in Tanjore District.

Having come from these various locations, the pundits at the College continued to participate in the network of pundits that stretched across the Tamil country, as exemplified by the collaboration that produced the 1812 *Tirukkural*. Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, for example, was taught by Cirkali Vatukanatha Pandaram, the man who both wrote an endorsement for the 1811 Tamil grammar and certified the final version of the 1812 *Tirukkural*. The most influential pundit network appears to have been located in Tanjore District, linking the *matt* at Tiruvavatuturai, the court at Tanjore and the college at Kumbakonam with literary life in Madras. Most pundits went from the Tanjore region to Madras, although one College pundit, Cantiracekara Kaviraca Pantitar, left Madras and taught at Kumbakonam College for a brief period. But Madras, with the College and then the University and private colleges, had become the place where literary careers were made. An incident in the life of U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer, the famous pundit of the late nineteenth century, is revealing: when he was about to leave the *matt* at Tiruvavatuturai and take up a teaching post at Kumbakonam College, his teacher encouraged him by saying, 'You will not only fill Tyagaraja Cettiyar's [a prominent scholar] place there, but will proceed from there to Madras and occupy with renown the exalted station of Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, Makalinka Aiyar and Vicakaperumal Aiyar [former pundits at the College or its successor, the High School].'[66]

Once their traditional knowledge had been allied to the patronage and technology at the College, and guided by Ellis and his successor Richard Clarke, these pundits spearheaded the new print-led literary

culture in the city. Although all of them were involved with publishing books either inside or outside the press, or both, two men stand out: Tantavaraya Mutaliyar and Muttucami Pillai. But the very first Tamil Head Pundit at the College, Cittampala Tecikar (or Pandaram or Vattiyar), also contributed to the changing role of pundits in Tamil printing.

Cittampala Tecikar's background is not recorded, but he appears to have been a consummate scholar, accomplished in both Sanskrit and Tamil. Whereas the College's first publication in 1813 (a reprint of Beschi's common grammar) required little more than setting new type, Cittampala Tecikar's preparation of a Tamil prose grammar (*Ilakkana Curukkam*, also in 1813) required original thought, and his 1815 *Ramayanam Uttarakantam* was a translation of the last section of the Sanskrit epic. The title page of that second book is important because it announces that this text was written by him, one of the first times an Indian was formally acknowledged (on the title page) as the author of a book printed in India; it thus marked the new role of the pundit as text-maker and not just assistant. The Tamil title page explains that the book was written in 'both high and low Tamil and in easy prose so that students at the College could learn Tamil', and then adds that 'during the righteous reign of the King of England [?], governed by the good laws of Manu and praised in learned languages for fertile mountains and fields, [this book] is published by the College officials who are famed for their deep knowledge of the many arts and sciences'. This paean almost certainly refers to Ellis, who requested his Head Tamil Pundit to undertake the translation. Although this translation and the earlier grammar were Cittampala Tecikar's only books, he played a role in others printed at the College.

For instance, he edited the initial sections of Beschi's *Catur-akarati*, later completed and published in 1824; he also began the 'collection of Tamil tales' which was later completed by Tantavaraya Mutaliyar and published as the *Katamancari* in 1826. Another work he started was the translation of Manu's dharma sastras, and reportedly earned the standard fee of 1000 pagodas for it, but the work was never completed and there is no mention of a reward in the Madras Public

Consultations.[67] That amount was certainly paid to him for the purchase of a copyright to another translation, this time by his recently deceased brother, Purur Vattiyar. In his petition to the College, Cittampala Tecikar explained that his brother ('well-versed in the *Tolkappiyam, Kural, Cintamani,* and assisted by five other learned scholars') had prepared a verse translation of the *Smriti Chandrika* (the text about which Ellis wrote an essay, printed posthumously in 1827), but had suddenly died.[68] Cittampala Tecikar explained that he had now put his brother's verse translation into prose, which he offered for a price of 1000 pagodas; if the government would give him this amount, and a little rent-free land, the pundit pledged to erect a public choultry on that land. In fact, he had already found a good spot on the trunk road between Chingleput and Trichinopoly, but this scheme, to convert a pundit's skills into charitable work, never (as far as I can tell) materialised. The translation, however, was accepted for publication and was printed in 1826, but by then Cittampala Tecikar had retired from the College and the title page named another pundit, Kantaswami Pulavar.[69] Cittampala Tecikar died in 1832.

Two other pundits at the College were even more influential in the rise of printed Tamil literature during the first decades of the nineteenth century. One of these was Muttusami Pillai, who, as we know, played a vital role in bringing Beschi's works to light; although he is usually designated as the official 'Manager' of the College, he was also a scholar in his own right.

Muttusami Pillai was a Tamil Catholic from Pondicherry, the other urban intellectual centre, not far from Madras. An important scholarly link between Pondicherry and Madras had been established before the College, at the end of the eighteenth century; after Ellis arrived in Madras in 1796, he was taught by Swaminatha Pillai, who was a Tamil Catholic from the French colony. In 1798 Ellis directed his tutor to prepare a manuscript on the life and writings of Beschi; the manuscript was written and submitted, but Ellis was not satisfied and returned to the project almost two decades later, when he was Head of the College Board. In about 1817, Ellis sent Muttusami Pillai 'south' to collect palm-leaf and paper manuscripts of Beschi's works and details of his

life; when he returned, Muttusami Pillai wrote the first modern literary biography in Tamil. His manuscript, 'The Life-history of Viramamunivar' (*Viramamunivarin Carittiram*), was only completed in 1822, after Ellis' death, and only published in 1840, in a revised English translation. Muttusami Pillai is also said to have composed a poem in praise of Ellis (*Taravukkoccakakkalippa*) in order to dispel the rumour that the leader of the College had converted to Hinduism: Ellis' translated verses of the *Tirukkural* ended with the Saiva invocation 'Nama Sivayya', but Muttusami Pillai explained that by this Ellis simply meant 'the only God'.[70]

An efficient administrator and a gifted scholar, Muttusami Pillai also published four books outside the College. His first book was a compilation of Catholic prayers, hymns, biblical stories and ritual instructions, entitled *Attuma Uttiyanam* ('Garden of the Soul' [?]); it was published in 1817 by Nanappirakaca Pillai of the Commercial Press. Muttusami Pillai's prayer book was one of the first Tamil books to include a Table of Contents and a hand-coloured woodblock print, of a tree of life nourished by angels and attacked by the devil. His second book, *Veta Vikarpa Tikkaram*, a refutation of an earlier book attacking Christianity, was published in 1820. According to a later source, when Muttusami Pillai recited this refutation before the learned men of the College, he was presented with a 'breastplate set with precious stones, and a suit of Surat shawls'.[71] In 1831, Muttusami Pillai also produced, in collaboration with another College pundit, an edition of the *Tirukkural, Tiruvalluvamalai, Nalatiyar* at the Vepery press. His last book, in 1840, was an edition of an old Tamil grammar, *Cintamani Nikantu*.

The most famous Tamil pundit at the College, however, a man who both succeeded Cittampala Tecikar and worked closely with Muttusami Pillai, was Tantavaraya Mutaliyar (b.1790? d. 1850). His literary life, so closely allied with the College in its first years, is illustrative of the changes in Tamil publishing in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was a Tamil pundit, born in the last decade of the eighteenth century and taught by traditional scholars of his time; and yet, as far as we know, all his compositions were printed books. Many of those were

printed at the College, although, like Muttusami Pillai, he also published with other presses. Among his books were the first printed collections of Tamil folktales; largely because of his translation of the *Pancatantra*, he was the first Tamil pundit to become a public figure, drawn into political debate and invoked as a model for future Tamil scholars, including U.Ve. Swaminatha Iyer, as mentioned above.

Tantavaraya Mutaliyar was born in a Vellala family in Villinallur, Chingleput District, just outside Madras, and lost his father when he was young. He studied first with his uncle and then with Velappa Tecikar, Varatappa Mutaliyar and finally with the famous Cirkali Vatukanatha Pandaram; during this tutelage, he is reported to have learned Sanskrit, English, Marathi, Kannada and Hindustani. He joined the College soon after 1812, probably as a Tamil Native Teacher, and later, when Cittampala Tecikar retired, became Head Tamil Pundit. At the College he continued his learning, studying *Nannul* (the medieval grammar) with Ramanuja Kavirayar, another College pundit. When he left the College in 1839, he was posted to the Sudr Ameen court at Vizagapatnam and then at Cuddalore and was finally as Principal Sudr Ameen in Chingleput. He died in 1850.[72]

Tantavaraya Mutaliyar edited, compiled or wrote eight books during his lifetime; five were intended for students at the College and were printed at the College Press, while the other three were directed at a Tamil public and published elsewhere. His first book was a Tamil primer (*Ilakkana Vinavitai*) printed at the College in 1820 (and reissued in a new edition in 1828); this work finally gave the students at the College a simple prose grammar, although the more ambitious learners continued to use Beschi's two grammars, one in Latin and the other in English translation. In 1824 Tantavaraya Mutaliyar and Ramacandra Kavirayar, published an edition of Beschi's *Catur-akarati;* in 1826 Tantavaraya Mutaliyar published the first examples of folklore printed in Madras: a collection of tales (*Katamancari*) and a translation (from a Marathi text) of the *Pancatantra*. In recognition of these achievements, the government agreed to the College's request that he should receive a reward of 1000 pagodas.[73] Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's last book printed

at the College was another collection of Tamil folktales (*Katacintamani*, 1833), which was published the same year in a pirated edition by the Karnataka Carittiram Press in Madras.

By the early 1830s, the Head Tamil Pundit at the College was looking to a wider audience for his books. His 1831 edition (with Muttusami Pillai) of the *Tirukkural, Tiruvalluva Malai, Nalatiyar* was transitional: it was printed at the Vepery press but dedicated to the College, which bought fifty copies for its students. Within a few years, however, he was editing other traditional Tamil texts on his own and without mention of the College: a miscellany (*Nannul, Purapporul Venpa Malai* and *Akapporul Vilakkam*) in 1835; and *Centan Tivakaram* (with Nayanappa Mutaliyar) in 1836. Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's shift from producing teaching tools for the College to editing classical texts for Tamil readers is representative of the fundamental reshaping of literary culture in Madras in the first third of the century. Both inside and outside the College, pundits were acquiring a knowledge of the processes of book-making that would soon launch them into the publishing business itself.

Pundit-publishers in the 1830s

In the 1830s, after two hundred and fifty years of print history in Tamil, commercial publishing began to develop in Madras. This decisive change was achieved when Indian-owned presses printed Tamil texts for Tamil readers. The statistics are striking: in those two hundred and fifty years before 1830, only three such texts (to my knowledge) had been printed in Madras (the 1809 pamphlet, the 1812 *Tirukkural* and the 1817 collection of Catholic prayers), but in the decade of the 1830s alone more than eighty such books were published.[74] As we know, the College Press, the missionary press at Vepery and the Commercial Press also printed Tamil texts before—and after—1830, but these were aimed primarily at Europeans. Some of these latter books were surely read or otherwise used by Indians, as well, but they were typically either ethical texts (such as the *Tirukkural*), or grammars (like Subbaraya Mutaliyar's) or textbooks destined for government schools, which began in Madras in the 1820s; in 1828, for example, the newly established press at the

American Mission in Madras published a history textbook in Tamil. There were a few anomalies, too, such as the Tamil translation (alongside Jonathan Scott's English translation) of part of the *Arabian Nights* in 1825 and a Hebrew text (in English translation) in 1819, both published by the Commercial Press.

The reorientation in Tamil printing and literary culture in the 1830s was accelerated but not initiated by the 1835 relaxation of press controls; indeed, as noted above, at least seven Indian-owned presses were active in Madras before that date, and possibly others which remain unrecorded.[75] We also know that the 1835 Act did not repeal existing legislation in Madras, since no press law existed, but only reformed existing practice. In that city the reaction to this important but often misunderstood act was muted.

Charles Metcalfe's legislation, as published in the *Fort St George Gazette* in August 1835, announced that 'relative to the 2nd and 6th clauses of Act XI of 1835 [the Press Act]', persons printing 'public news or comments on Public news' should register at the Office of the Chief Magistrate and Superintendent of Police.[76] In addition, any printed material, specifically 'any book or paper' (*pustakamum kakitamum*, in the Tamil text of the notice), must display the name of the publisher, the name of the printer and location of the press; failure to do so would earn a fine of 5000 rupees.[77] While the relaxation of press control was surely greeted with some relief in Madras (since the *Government Gazette* had been twice prosecuted for libel in the previous year), it was wildly celebrated in Calcutta, where the editor of the *Times* had been the subject of a major criminal enquiry.[78]

Allowing that the 1835 Act did assist the growth of commercial printing in Madras (Sarasvati, an influential Tamil-owned press began that very year), we should view that development as part of a broader pattern linking printing and public politics during the 1830s. Although it is well known that Hindus in Madras first formed a political organisation (Madras Native Association) in the 1850s, and a High School (Paccaiyappa's) and a newspaper (*The Crescent*) in the 1840s, these events were anticipated in the 1830s, when Indians in Madras published periodicals (*Carnatic Chronicle* in 1833; *Metrac Kiranikal* in 1834 or 1835),

founded schools and entered into public debates. This emerging link between print and politics is best illustrated by the fact that commercial printing in the 1830s was dominated by three presses owned by pundits and that, in varying degrees, these pundit-publishers and their allied organisations became involved in public campaigns, notably against missionary activity, in Madras.[79]

The first of these pundit-presses to appear was Kalvi Vilakkam, which issued its first book in 1834. Kalvi Vilakkam ('Knowledge-Elucidation'), located in the village of Otterikucappettai, near Madras, was the joint venture of two brothers, Caravanaperumal Aiyar and Vicakaperumal Aiyar, although the former alone was usually listed on title pages as the owner. The Aiyar brothers, as I shall call them, also appear to be the first Brahmins (if we except Pero Luis in the sixteenth century) to play a role in the history of printing in the Tamil country. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the great majority of printed authors and publishers were high caste (Mutaliyar, Pillai, Pantaram, Kavirayar) but not Brahmin; and only two of the many pundits at the College were Brahmins (Sivakoluntu Tecikar and Makalinga Aiyar). Sons of a well-known pundit, the Aiyar brothers were born in Tiruttanikai, a village near Madras, in the last years of the eighteenth century; by 1850 they had published more than forty books and left an indelible mark on Tamil literary culture.

Between them, the Aiyar brothers wrote or edited some twenty-four books, mostly old grammars (*Nannul*), ethical texts (Auvaiyar's texts and the *Tirukkural*) and *Naitatam*, as well as more recent texts from the Nayaka period (*Viralivitututu*, for example).[80] They also wrote and published for the growing school textbook market, including a primer of Tamil poetry (1839), a set of mathematics books (*Ciru Kuli* and *Perum Kuli,* 1840) and one on astronomy (*Kola Tipikai*, 1839); the last book, according to a contemporary account, 'exploded the Purana and adopted the Copernican system'.[81] This prolific pundit publishing team was augmented by Caravanaperumal Aiyar's son, Kantasami Aiyar, who contributed to several edited works published by the press. Kalvi Vilakkam Press published its last book in 1847.

In addition to their own titles, the Aiyar brothers brought out another

eighteen books, both medieval and contemporary compositions.
Looking at the Aiyar brothers' substantial literary and publishing record,
we can see that it exerted a deep influence on the formation of Tamil
literary culture, especially in making available texts which carried the
burden of religious reform during the later half of the century. They
published not only contemporary poetic compositions in praise of Siva,
Ganesa and Devi but also the first printed editions of major Saiva classics,
several edited by P. Nayanappa Mutaliyar, a pundit at the College.[82]
For example, they published a composition by T. Civappirakaca, who
used his 'militant' form of Saivism (Virasaivism) to rail against Christianity,
as early as the seventeenth century;[83] they also published Cittar poems,
an elusive corpus of religious and medical texts, which were revived by
Ramalingaswami (1823–74), the central poet of religious reform in
Tamil during the century. By publishing these and other texts, the
Aiyar brothers laid the foundations for the neo-Saiva movement, led
by Arumukam Navalar, Damodaram Pillai and J.M. Nallaswami Pillai,
which underpinned a major stream of Dravidian nationalism at the
turn of the century.[84]

Within their lifetimes, too, the Aiyar brothers and their press
participated in public affairs, although not openly in political campaigns
as some pundit-publishers did. First, during the 1850s, Vicakaperumal
held the very public post of Tamil Professor at Presidency College; the
appointment of his successor, Rev. Peter Percival, in 1859 was denounced
in the press by some Tamils (see below). Second, the brothers established
the Viveka Kalvi Salai, which they described on the title page of one of
their books as 'an organisation set up by distinguished gentlemen in
Madras'; as its name suggests, it was a school, with the younger brother,
Caravanaperumal, as Head Tamil Pundit. Although I could find nothing
more about this institution, it was probably, like other Indian-run schools
in Madras at the time, a small centre for teaching Hindu students
through a modernising curriculum, including the Aiyar brothers' own
textbooks. Whatever its history, this school indicates that pundit-
publishers were involved in more than producing books.

A second press that contributed to the rapid increase in Tamil-
controlled publishing in Madras during the 1830s and 1840s was owned

and operated by Tiruvenkatacala Mutaliyar; his was the only one among the three presses owned by a College pundit.[85] Although he became a College pundit and later an influential publisher, little is known about the early life of Tiruvenkatacala Mutaliyar. It has been suggested, but again not confirmed, that he established a press called Iyal Tamil Vilakkam in Kancipuram as early as 1819;[86] it may have been at Kancipuram that he taught the leading traditional poet-scholar of the century, Minatcicuntaram Pillai. Once at the College, he was overshadowed by his more prolific contemporaries and merely assisted with books printed by the College press (such as Henry Harkness' edition of *Ariccuvati* in 1826). Outside the College, however, Tiruvenkatacala Mutaliyar became a well-known editor and author. If his published works were few, they were significant: the first printed editions of Kampan's *Ramayana* (*Ayottiya Kantam* and *Araniya Kantam*) and of *Rama Natakam*, an extremely popular verse drama from the eighteenth century; he also composed 108 verses on various manifestations of Visnu, published in the early 1840s by the Vittiya Vilacam Press, which was owned by Ramasami Pillai, the College Librarian.

Both scholar and editor, Tiruvenkatacala Mutaliyar also had considerable impact on Tamil literary history as a publisher. His Sarasvati Press, which issued its first title in 1835, one year after Kalvi Vilakkam, drew many of his colleagues from the College into a literary institution of diverse talents. The prolific P. Nayanappa Mutaliyar edited several Sarasvati books, including *Tancaivanan Kovai* (1836), a medieval composition considered the benchmark for the popular genre of narrative love poetry; in addition, College pundits Makalinga Aiyar, Capapati Mutaliyar and Vetagiri Mutaliyar also edited classical Tamil works for the press. Sarasvati published more recent religious poetry, too, most of which was Saiva, as was true of Kalvi Vilakkam.

In addition to the classics and early modern works, Sarasvati also issued contemporary books, but unlike the Aiyar brothers, Tiruvenkatacala Mutaliyar did not publish schoolbooks; rather, he began to print books with a different public purpose: to give advice regarding social conduct, marriage and domestic life. For the first time, through the Sarasvati Press, Hindu Tamils used the medium of print to address these issues.[87]

An interesting example of this new public dimension to Tamil publishing is a pair of pamphlets printed (as a second edition) by Sarasvati Press in 1838. *A Garland of Advice for Women* and *A Garland of Advice for Men* (*Penputti Malai* and *Anputti Malai*, printed on sixteen and twelve tiny pages, respectively) were composed by A. Mutaliyar 'in the presence' of Makalinga Aiyar, in the form of simple song-lines which advise Hindu men and women on the correct conduct in an age of change. Men were told what not to do: 'Don't deceive anyone' and 'don't harm the poor'; 'don't go to the dasi's [prostitute's] house' and 'don't sleep late in the morning'. Women, on the other hand, were admonished in positive terms: 'Be truthful' and 'respect the poor'; 'be loyal to your husband' and 'rise early in the morning.' These tiny pamphlets no doubt represent a large body of similar ephemera, valuable to a reconstruction of social values of the period but unfortunately lost to us.

The growing public role of pundit-publishers in the 1830s and 1840s culminated in Kalvi Kalanciyam, the last of the three major Tamil presses of the period. Located on Salay Street (or Mint Street) in George Town, the heart of the Indian quarter and known in European sources as 'Black Town', the Kalvi Kalanciyam Press issued its first title in 1839. In the ten years that followed, Kalvi Kalanciyam published over thirty books; taking the lead of Sarasvati Press, they published a variety of books: versified advice to children and mothers, religious poetry (again mostly Saiva) and traditional Tamil texts (such as *Nannul* and Kampan's *Sarasvati Malai*), including the now-canonical *Catur-akarati* by Beschi. And like the earlier two Tamil presses, Kalvi Kalanciyam was owned and operated by pundits, Umapati Mutaliyar and his three brothers, the sons of Aiyacuvami Mutaliyar of Caitapuram, near Madras. However, these Mutaliyar brothers were not pundits of the same calibre as those who owned the Kalvi Vilakkam and Sarasvati presses; although Umapati Mutaliyar and his brothers composed several pamphlets of verse, most of the editing and scholarly work was performed for their press by other pundits, particularly Makalinga Aiyar. Finally, Kalvi Kalanciyam, like its slightly older contemporaries, was not exclusively a literary institution; soon after issuing its first book, Kalvi Kalanciyam and its allied organisation, the 'Catur Veda Siddhanta Society', extended the

public role of pundit-publishers and became the mouthpiece for a section of the Hindu community in Madras.

The cause in which the owners of Kalvi Kalanciyam participated was the anti-missionary campaign of the 1840s, itself part of a wider growth of Hindu public opinion in Madras before mid-century. As others have shown in detail, the formation of a Hindu public sphere in Madras was largely a reaction to the perceived threat of Christianity, compounded by the very real loss of government patronage. Soon after the ban on missionaries in British India was lifted in 1813, Christianity became an increasingly visible presence in Madras; whereas before 1800, only two churches had been built in Madras, one in the Fort and another at Vepery, between 1810 and 1830, five new churches were constructed, three of them in the Indian quarter of George Town and close to Hindu temples.[88] Christian schools soon followed, but what caused greater offence to local residents was public preaching on the streets.[89]

Another source of controversy were conversions to Christianity, especially by Brahmins, some of which resulted in court cases for alleged kidnapping; one case was prosecuted before an audience of several thousand in the Supreme Court at Madras in the 1840s.[90] Printed Christianity also assumed alarming dimensions: by 1832, more than 40,000 tracts were printed in Tamil alone and by 1852 there were 210,000.[91] Fears that Hindu culture would be overwhelmed by Christianity were disproportionate to the small number of Indian converts in the city, but the imposing stone churches and their English-language schools, the loud preaching and the omnipresence of Christian literature must have seemed invasive.[92] In fact, as Susan Neild has shown, this religious intrusion was accompanied by a relentless move into George Town by European shops and businesses in the first decades of the century.[93]

Concomitant with this growing European religious and economic presence in Hindu neighbourhoods of the city was a marked shift in government policy. Until about 1830, Fort St George had intended to play the role of neutral arbiter between Indians and missionaries; as already mentioned, for instance, in 1815 the College rejected a manuscript from a respected missionary because it was 'of a nature altogether

foreign to the College'. The gradual shift in colonial attitude and practice, away from Orientalism and towards anglicisation, encouraged a new interventionist stance by government that swept neutrality aside;[94] as one example, the court cases for conversion (kidnapping to some) invariably acquitted the missionaries. This 'anglicising impulse', so well known in the shift from Indian languages to English as the medium of education, also had direct impact on Hindu institutions in Madras. By 1840, Fort St George had severed its connections with Hindu choultries (alms houses) and temples; although temples had been a valuable source of government revenue, they were portrayed in the English-language press as bastions of barbarity and idolatry. Whatever the rhetoric, the turnaround was unmistakable: government support had been withdrawn from temples and given to churches.

Opposition to these changes took different forms, including ad hoc petitions to the authorities at Fort St George. In one case in 1817, an attempt by the Church Missionary Society to build a church on Munnarswami Kovil Street in George Town, almost in front of a Hindu temple, was blocked by local residents' protests; but the government found a compromise and granted an alternative site on Popham's Broadway, not far away.[95] On that site, in 1820 the Church Missionary Society built Tucker's Church, where Dr Rottler 'preached in Tamil to an overflowing congregation'.[96] Another method of protest was to approach Christian organisations directly; for instance, preaching in the streets provoked Hindus to write angry letters warning the enthusiastic preachers and their native catechists not to evangelise in their neighbourhood.[97]

Hindus in Madras also began to form new organisations. As early as 1829, for example, the Saiva Siddhanta Sangam with Ramasami Kavirayar as President, is mentioned in a book published by Sanmukam Vilacam Press. The best known of these organisations, however, was the Madras Hindu Literary Society. Modelled on the Madras Literary Society, itself established in 1818 as an offshoot of the College, the Madras Hindu Literary Society was formed in 1833 'on behalf of the respectable portion of the Madras Hindoo Community'.[98] The first President of the Society was Cavelly Venkata Lutchmiah, an influential

man who had worked for Colonel Mackenzie, the famous collector of south Indian manuscripts; Lutchmiah was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society in London. Other important supporters included Srinivasa Pillay (a wealthy merchant, later co-founder of the Madras Native Association and member of the Board of Governors of Madras University) and George Norton (Advocate-General of Madras, later President of Paccaiyappa's College and President of the Board of Governors of Madras University). Norton was an outspoken critic of the government's pro-Christian policy and had argued two court cases against missionaries;[99] as a passionate supporter of vernacular education and literature, he excoriated those British officials who considered mere secular education useless because 'they must have their Bible'.[100]

When a member of the Madras Hindu Literary Society was appointed both Deputy Superintendent of Police and a Magistrate, the President wrote a letter of gratitude and asked that Mr Vembakum Raghavacharriyar be allowed to accept an 'honorary gown'.[101] But the relationship between this body of prominent Hindus and the government was never cordial. Soon after its formation in 1833, the Society started a school which taught in English, Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit—but it had little cash. In frustration, and considerable irritation, the President wrote a letter to Fort St George in which he complained that his previous letters requesting support had received no reply. Again, attempting to appeal to what he hoped was government support for native education, he explained that he had formed the Madras Hindu Literary Society because, unlike Calcutta and Bombay, no such organisation for spreading 'scientific knowledge in English and Oriental languages to our youths' existed in Madras.[102] He then outlined the meagre financial resources of the Society (only 235 rupees in hand) and concluded with this observation:

Many of the respectable Natives are watching a favourable opportunity to observe to what extent the government will bestow their aid toward the Support of this Society and unless the government are graciously pleased to forward its interest with their Patronizing care, I feel confident that the exertions of the Natives would be lukewarm.[103]

Despite this plea and attached letters of support from the Royal Asiatic Society in London, no government aid was forthcoming, not even an exemption from postal charges.[104] We will support native education, said Fort St George in so many words, through our own system of public schools.

As elsewhere in colonial India, education was the battleground on which these newly established Hindu organisations in Madras, such as the Kalvi Kalanciyam and its allied body, confronted Christian organisations. Christian schools were not new—Benjamin Schultze began one in the city as far back as 1726—but now they were seen to pose a serious threat to Hindus. They were well funded and they taught in English, which made them a crucible for conversion. As schools were proposed for construction in Hindu neighbourhoods, apprehension turned into confrontation on Salay Street, in the centre of George Town.

A proposal to build a church on that street had been defeated by local protest in 1817, as mentioned earlier, but the project was not abandoned altogether. In 1834, Rev. Drew purchased land in Salay Street, ostensibly for a school, under a missionary scheme supported by the Native Education Society. Protest against this plan was soon in print. Throughout the autumn of that year, the Madras Hindu Literary Society wrote letters of protest to the *Madras Male Asylum Herald* challenging the missionaries' claim that the proposed school would not undermine the religion of Hindu students; the missionaries, writing as the Native Education Society, defended their project in the same newspaper and stated that biblical instruction would not be mandatory. In its editorials, the newspaper took a sceptical view of these refutations, pointing out that a Christian school would inevitably favour Christianity. In the end, the school was built and, just as residents had feared, soon became a base for Christian activity: missionaries and catechists began to preach on the streets of George Town.

Rev. Drew had more ambitious plans. In 1839, he bought the adjacent land, where he proposed to build a residence for missionaries and a church.[105] Opposition to this alarming proposal galvanised local residents into forming the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society; like the Madras

Hindu Literary Society, this was a public organisation set up by Hindus in Madras, but there the similarities ended. Unlike the literary society, which was modelled on its colonial counterpart and used English, the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society had no model and voiced its opinions primarily in Tamil. Located in the heart of George Town, it had few, if any, connections to influential circles in government. In fact, the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society was formed by the owners of Kalvi Kalanciyam Press, located at No. 14 Salay Street near the Pillaiyar temple; for this reason, the society is known in English-language sources as the Salay (or Salai) Street Society. The press and the society were run by the same Mutaliyar brothers, and toward the same ends: the promotion of Hindu culture and opposition to Christian churches, schools and preaching. Protests against these activities, as we have seen, began much earlier, but with the formation of the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society, the isolated petitions and individual letters of protest could be consolidated into a single document; more importantly, the pundit-publisher could issue protest pamphlets.

In 1839, the year the press began, the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society sent several petitions to government, one of them with one hundred and sixty-nine signatures.[106] These petitions argued that the school, built five years before, had become a front for a church and that Rev. Drew

> made it his business to attend personally or to depute other native converts near the pretended school twice a week and continue to bother leading passengers and neighbours in a most provocative manner with his religious discourses, despising the Hindu religion and to persuade them to receive several tracts of a contemptible nature.[107]

In the end, the government did not, as it had in 1817, block construction, but the church was never built;[108] when Rev. Drew became seriously ill and left for England, the project lost momentum.[109]

Still, the anti-missionary campaign, now in full flow, had other battles to fight; in fact, the level of public protest startled a missionary organisation in Madras, which reported that '[a]t no former period in the history of Missions in Madras has the native community been so

violently and virulently opposed to Christianity'.[110] Much of this protest was waged, under the banner of the Kalvi Kalanciyam Press, by the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society. In 1841, the Mutaliyar brothers began to publish a periodical called *Tecapimani*, which printed essays and petitions denouncing missionary activity, not only in Madras but also in Tinnevelly District. In Tinnevelly, which had become the centre for conversions by evangelical Protestantism in south India, tensions between Hindus and converts in the 1840s had turned violent, with riots, house burnings and many deaths. To counteract missionary activity, local Hindus in two temple towns in the district formed the Vibhuti Society, so called because it made the public display of sacred ash (*viputi*) an emblem of Hindu identity.[111] To bolster its strength, this provincial society forged direct links with the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society in Madras, which then provided legal assistance to Hindus who had been convicted of offences against missionaries in provincial courts. The Madras society also used print, issuing pamphlets from Kalvi Kalanciyam to attack Christianity and to refute books or tracts that denounced Hinduism, one of which was the influential 'Blind Way' by Vedanayakam Sastri. The press also acted as a conduit for distributing anti-missionary literature written by others; a notice printed in an 1841 book, for instance, invited anyone who wished to obtain a copy of 'Kiristu mata kantanam' ('A refutation of Christianity') to write to Umapati Mutaliyar at the Kalvi Kalanciyam Press.

The most public, and perhaps most effective, action sponsored by Kalvi Kalanciyam and the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society was a large protest meeting in 1846. Chaired by L. Chetty, wealthy proprietor of the *Crescent* newspaper, and held in Paccaiyappa's Hall on Popham's Broadway in George Town, this 'great convention' of five hundred Hindus, as it was called locally, produced a Memorial which was eventually signed by 12,000 people.[112] It requested the government to cease its support for Christianity, especially bible teaching in schools, and its opposition to Hinduism, in the form of proposed legislation (Lex Loci Act) that would allow converts to retain their traditional inheritance rights and thereby remove a major obstacle to them abandoning Hinduism. However, the most immediate cause for this unprecedented public

demonstration of political dissent was the intervention of Governor Tweeddale in the court cases resulting from the anti-missionary disturbances in Tinnevelly, which had the support of the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society. Tweeddale had dismissed a Madras judge, Lewin, who had been persuaded by influential men, including Umapati Mutaliyar, owner of the Kalvi Kalanciyam Press, to release the Hindu prisoners from Tinnevelly. In protest against this high-handed intervention, the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society and L. Chetty convened the public meeting and wrote the resulting Memorial. The next year, in 1847, another large protest meeting, this time attracting people from Cuddalore and Chingleput, was again held in George Town, and another Memorial, attacking government support for Christian instruction in public schools, was signed and sent to Fort St George.[113]

The 1847 Memorial, the last in the anti-missionary campaign led by the pundit-publishers and the *Crescent*, provoked dissent from at least one prominent Hindu. Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, the former Head Tamil Pundit at the College, author of the famous *Pancatantra* and other Tamil books, was rewarded in his old age with an appointment as Principal Sudr Ameen in Chingleput Court. In the Memorial of 1847, however, he was singled out as an example of how Christianity corrupts Hindus. The Memorial alleged that he had been persuaded by Christians to send his children to an infamous Christian school (run by Anderson), that he had paid a monthly subscription of ten rupees and that he did this to retain his government post. That a well-known Hindu pundit, now a public official, would send his children to Anderson's School to learn English was indeed controversial: established in 1837 by missionary Rev. John Anderson, that school, which later became Madras Christian College, was the centre of a scandal in the 1840s when a few Brahmin students converted to Christianity. To refute this allegation, Tantavaraya Mutaliyar (who was high caste but not a Brahmin) wrote a letter to government, explaining that he did indeed send his sons to the school in order that they would learn English;[114] he did the same, he said, when he was posted in Cuddalore and in Chingleput (where Anderson also had a school). This now famous pundit also admitted that he paid a monthly subscription, as other 'leading citizens' did, and that bible instruction was included in the

course of study; but, he added, no Hindus objected to that. Finally, he dismissed the Memorial itself as the distorted views of a small clique, represented by the *Crescent* and a few Tamils and Europeans. One detail he neglected to mention was that his son had converted to Christianity.[115]

Contrary to Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's claim, Hindus did object, as we know, and they objected in print: while the retired College pundit wrote a letter to the government, the various memorials and reports of the public protest meetings were published in newspapers, and Kalvi Kalanciyam published pamphlets.[116] Munro's fears of a free press had proved to be justified. In the 1830s, the first publicly printed debate in Madras, carried out between the Madras Hindu Literary Society and a missionary organisation in the pages of the *Madras Male Asylum Herald*, had been an exchange of polite letters. Ten years later, aggressive missionary activity, accompanied by a shift in government policy toward anglicisation and fuelled by the violence in Tinnevelly, had raised the stakes. Crucially, the Hindu public could now respond in print, in books, newspapers and journals, through their own printing presses.

Journalism of different political stripes and in several languages flourished in Madras in the 1840s. British-owned journalism in that decade was represented by the *Fort St George Gazette* (1832–71),the *Spectator* (1836–58, Indian-owned in the later period), the *Athenaeum and Daily News* (1845–85) and the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* (1822–66, with gaps). Missionary journalism in the 1840s consisted of the Tamil-language *Madras Magazine* (1831–46), which became *Cattiya Tutan* in 1846, and the English-language *Native Herald* (1841–?), run by Rev. Anderson.[117] Missionary journals in Tamil also appeared from Nagercoil, Palaiyamkottai, Bangalore, Madurai and Colombo (and much earlier, from Jaffna). The ownership of *Raja Viruttipotini* (1832–?) is unknown, but it enjoyed a government subsidy and published news and articles from English sources in Tamil and Telugu translation, a publishing strategy that proved successful for many periodicals throughout the century.

Indian-owned journalism in Madras began in 1833 with the *Carnatic Chronicle*, which was soon joined by the *Madras Chronicle* (1835), the *Native Intelligencer* (1840) and the monthly *Potujana Piracarani* (1840;

English title, *Native Circular*).[118] This last title, begun by Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao and Ranganatha Mudaliar, later merged with the *Madrasee*, which had been founded by Ramachandra Iyer (later Chief Justice of Mysore). None of these Indian-owned or Tamil-language journals, however, played a significant role in the public debates of the time; most were content to reprint, often in translation, news items culled from papers in Calcutta or London. It was only when the last-mentioned journal, the merged venture, was bought by L. Chetty and relaunched in 1844 as *Matiyum* (*Crescent*), that Indian-owned journalism began to exert a marked influence on public debates.

Born in 1806 in a Telugu merchant family, L. Chetty became wealthy during a fortuitous turn in the fluctuating cotton market and later began the *Crescent* for the purpose, in his words, of the 'amelioration of the condition of the Hindus'.[119] His journal, appearing three times a month, in English and Tamil and Telugu, from the Hindu Press (publisher of later protest petitions in the 1850s), became a second public voice for the Hindu community in Madras during the 1840s. While the Kalvi Kalanciyam Press used its literary skills to take on a public role and publish religious texts and counterblasts against Christianity, the *Crescent* became a more explicit political weapon in the anti-missionary and other campaigns; as a periodical rather than a publishing house, the *Crescent* could also respond to events quickly and enter into public debate on a regular basis. Its tone was sometimes blunt, declaring that 'the Hindus stand aloof from the Europeans, the influential part of whom, i.e. the evangelicals, they look upon as their declared and implacable enemies'.[120] Readership lagged behind ambitions, however, and in the early 1860s, when circulation dipped to one hundred and fifty, the *Crescent* ceased to publish and eventually bankrupted the owner.[121] Nevertheless, the *Crescent* was a milestone; another politically influential Indian-owned newspaper was not to appear in Madras until the late 1870s, when *The Hindu* was established, followed a few years later by its Tamil offshoot, *Cutecamittiran*. Long before that date, however, during the 1850s, in fact, Indians participated in public debate through another institution, the Madras Native Association.

Madras Native Association and New Politics

In the absence of an 1857 uprising in south India, historical analyses have identified other kinds of watersheds in nineteenth-century Madras. The most detailed published study of this period, by R. Suntharalingam in 1974, describes the shift in terms of old elites, mostly wealthy merchants, versus new elites, mostly graduates of Madras University.[122] English education at the university, he argued, empowered new professionals—lawyers, teachers and journalists—who then displaced traditional merchants, who lacked modern education. The 'big divide' occurred about 1860, when the first batch of graduates emerged from the University and took up positions in the professions. Prominent among the merchants displaced by English-educated professionals were those, including L. Chetty, who formed the Madras Native Association (MNA) in 1852.[123]

A more recent essay, by David Washbrook, however, points to the 1840s as the crucial decade that divided the old order from the new in nineteenth-century India;[124] this assessment is accurate for Madras, especially its emphasis on the 'anglicising impulse' as a fundamental cause of change, such as the rise of government support for missionary activity and the loss of it for Hindu institutions. Suntharalingam's thesis concerning old versus new elites remains valid, but when we move the watershed back to the 1840s, some revision is necessary. For instance, to his list of old and superseded elites we should add the pundits, both inside and outside the College. Second, Suntharalingam's analysis pays little attention to the anti-missionary protests of the 1840s and none at all to their origins among these pundits, their presses and allied organisations in the 1830s. Third, although Suntharalingam places the MNA among the old elites, I would suggest that this body of Hindu civic leaders itself represents a break with the earlier protest movement led by the pundit-publishers.

If Washbrook is correct in drawing the dividing line in the 1840s, we can extend his argument to highlight another consequence of the anglicisation: after mid-century, the early pundit-publishers and the fledgling Tamil journalism discussed above were pushed to the margins

of public debate, which was until the 1880s conducted almost entirely in English. This was not simply an imposition of colonial rule; the swing away from Indian languages occurred both within government and the urban public. By 1840, in fact, the demand by Indians in Madras for an English education had become a groundswell; the Secretary of the Madras School Book Society observed that 'almost every street' of the city had some kind of school teaching the new language.[125] In 1839, 70,000 people in the Madras Presidency signed a petition to government which contained a single request: 'My Lord ... we petition for our share in the benefits of [English-medium] education.'[126] In 1841, when George Norton looked back at the past ten years, he noted 'a very extraordinary change ... in the sentiments of the Native Society ... Above all, a conviction of the advantages of English education ... has spread widely among the superior classes of the Native population.'[127] Partial fulfilment of this desire came when the Madras University High School was opened in 1841. The university itself, with degree courses, did not begin until 1857, but by then, English, not Tamil or Telugu, had already become the language of public debate in the press, and within the MNA and its successors.

When the MNA was formed in 1852, the chief architects were L. Chetty (owner of the *Crescent*) and Srinivasa Pillay (a founder of the Madras Hindu Literary Society, now nearly defunct). Although, as fits Suntharalingam's definition of old elites, neither were educated at the Madras University High School, they were both competent in English. Chetty was educated at the 'Native Association Society School', undoubtedly in English, and had extensive contacts with British officials, including Edward Harley, editor of the *Crescent*, and John Bruce Norton, Advocate General, as well as Malcom Lewin and Patrick Smollett, both of whom published essays critical of British rule. L. Chetty was made a CSI (Companion of the Order of the Star of India) in 1861 and was elected to the Madras Legislative Council in 1863; he died in 1868. Srinivasa Pillay, a wealthy Tamil, also lacked formal English education but nevertheless favoured it for other Indians; he was more sanguine than Chetty about the uplifting effects of anglicisation and eventually broke away from the MNA, over this issue, to form a rival organisation

in 1853 that was devoted to social rather than political reforms. When Srinivasa Pillay died that year, a close associate took over and started his own newspaper, the *Rising Sun*. These two men, L. Chetty and S. Pillay, had together forged an alliance with the leaders of the anti-missionary campaign of the 1840s, but with the MNA they established an organisation with aims and methods different to those of the pundit-publishers.[128]

Missionaries remained soft targets, but the chief interests of the MNA were economic and political issues of concern to high-caste merchants and landowners. The six petitions sent to London by the MNA during the 1850s requested a 'redress of grievances' centring on excessive taxation, cruelty (flogging, for example) in exacting taxes, reform of the land revenue system, rights of landowners (*mirasdars*) and the salt monopoly.[129] Although scattered with references to Madras newspapers, including the *Crescent*, these petitions make little mention of the threat posed by Christianity. Only the final Memorial of the MNA, addressed to the Secretary of State for India in 1859, echoed the earlier protests in its criticism of government support for biblical instruction, indifference to Hindus, specifically to the loss of temple lands, and a lack of sensitivity to the need for 'caste and native holidays'.[130] The old anti-missionary fire was, however, turned on the appointment of churchmen as School Inspectors and on the appointment of Peter Percival as Professor at Presidency College (successor to the University High School); this rhetoric was convenient but the underlying issue was concern about who—Tamils or non-Tamils—would be permitted to represent the Tamil language in the public arena.

Percival was one of the most influential missionaries in south India during the nineteenth century. He first worked in Jaffna in the 1830s and 1840s, from where he published a book of Tamil proverbs. There he also trained Arumukam Navalar and Damodaram Pillai, who led the Tamil revival after the 1860s; in the 1850s, he became editor of a popular news magazine, *Tina Vartamani*, which (with a generous government subsidy) published Tamil and Telugu editions. But his appointment as Professor of Sanskrit and Vernacular Languages at Presidency College put him under public scrutiny as never before. Prof.

Percival, the 1859 Memorial charged, 'possesses merely a smattering of the Tamil, is just commencing the study of Telugu, and, in the opinion of Natives qualified to judge, is altogether incompetent' to teach Sanskrit.[131] That he should have been elevated to this position above the Hindu pundits at Presidency College, the Memorial continued, was an 'insult'.[132] Although unmentioned, one of those slighted was Makalinga Aiyar, the former College pundit and well-known author, who also taught at Presidency College.[133] Percival was also criticised in the Memorial for altering the verses of Auvaiyar in his book on 'Minor Poets', while other missionaries were attacked for their distorted representations of Hinduism in Tamil schoolbooks printed by the government. Only in this last petition, then, did the MNA address the issues of religious and cultural loss that fired the earlier protests; the new brand of Hindu public organisation was more interested in economic and political equality than cultural recovery.

Another contrast with the earlier protest campaign was the increasing reliance on English in public debate. Tamil had been the language of communication for the pundit-publishers and the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society; the *Crescent* published in Tamil (and also in English), and the public meetings in the 1840s were conducted primarily in Tamil (and Telugu), although the resulting petitions were translated into English before being sent to the government.[134] By the 1850s, however, English was becoming the public voice of protest: although the MNA meetings were still conducted largely in south Indian languages, copies of speeches were distributed in English; and more importantly, the resulting petitions were not just distributed but also published in English. Finally, since many of the MNA supporters were Europeans (George Norton was the most prominent) and its parent organisation was in Calcutta, the MNA in Madras conducted its official business in English.

Protest was still articulated in Tamil, in printed books and pamphlets, but it was limited in audience and often concealed. One printed book which illustrates this muted voice of Tamil is *A Tamil Vade-Mecum, or guide to ungrammatical expressions used in ordinary conversations, consisting of the vulgarisms of the Tamil language*, published in Madras in 1859.[135] In his Preface, P. Singarapelavanderam Pillay explains that the

book is intended to bridge the linguistic gap between Europeans who know some Tamil and the ordinary Tamils with whom they interact: 'It is the object of this book to set before Europeans the Tamil language as it is really spoken by the Native themselves.' Published at the SPCK-Caxton press in Vepery, the book boasted 160 subscribers, most of them prominent Europeans, including Governor Harris and the Orientalist Walter Elliot. The contents are predictable for such a manual: (1) an alphabetical listing of various colloquial expressions, (2) words not found in dictionaries, (3) proverbs, (4) lessons, short prose sections, (5) two sketches. However, one of the sketches, 'A conversation between southern men' (*Terkitti manitarkalutaiya campasanai*) is unexpected. Its eight printed pages tell a story, in dialogue, of how ordinary farmers in the southern districts are cheated and even beaten by local officials running the tax collection system. Two friends meet and one tells his story:

I had to go to Tenkasi to make a deposition and I saw a lot of rich men and dubashis, who had come in their palanquins, lounging around like a herd of cattle. Anyway, as I was telling them all about the wrongdoings in our village, a Writer [court official] kindly asked, 'So what's the situation now?' 'Cami,' I said, 'my father is now an old man but he had to mortgage all the ancestral property, everything he owned, his little bit of land in order to pay for a new land title and was reduced to eating old rice [*kanci*].'

He suffered even more losses, but he didn't speak back to the government, just suffered more and more. One day, as he was passing the time like this, the Village Accountant and his assistant came from the Tasildar's office to collect land taxes; they harassed him further by revaluing the land at a higher amount, which only increased the debt on his already mortgaged land, and issued a new lease deed. Now he was completely ruined, humiliated and reduced to the life of a beast. When I saw them do this, pompously ordering around illiterate, impoverished villagers, raising taxes and driving them off the land, I just couldn't stand it. So I went to see the government officials in that building across the bridge from Tinnevelly Junction.

I said, 'All of you responsible for this cruelty are disgraceful!' and then that Village Accountant, that scum of the scum, narrowed his eyes at me and ordered his peon to grab me. But I shouted, 'Let's see you touch me! Fat chance! Ain't going to happen!' That Village Accountant bastard grabbed me by the

scruff of my neck and marched me off to the Tasildar and gave him a cock and bull story, and levelled a charge [against me?]. When he heard that, that stupid ass of a Talsidar screamed at me, 'Don't ever speak to a government official like that!' Then he beat me and threw me out of his office. I wasn't going to take that injustice! So I went to another official and complained: 'This is your fault. And it's your duty to protect me.' He said, 'You're speaking to the Sheristar.' Then, putting on a fresh vesthi, he wrote out a detailed charge sheet and told me to go to the Collector. But I'm sick and tired of beating my brains out trying to fight this stupid system! I'd do better to get out of here, to Madras, and off to some other country, where I could haul sacks, like a bonded labourer, and drown my sorrows in drink.

Although the author's intention is unmistakable—to inform Europeans officials about the harsh realities in the provinces—it is doubtful that many of his intended readers would have got the message, buried as it was at the back of the manual and written in local slang;[136] one wonders, indeed, if any of the eminent subscribers understood what they had underwritten. By contrast, this same issue—cruelty and exploitation during tax collection—was openly aired in an English-language government report published in Madras in 1855. Public protest, even when speaking on behalf of ordinary Tamils, was apparently more effective when published in the language of the colonial state.[137]

Despite these limitations, by mid-century, the world of Tamil-language publishing had achieved some commercial success. Of the three pundit-presses, only the youngest, Kalvi Kalanciyam, survived into the 1850s; but in that decade, it was joined by about twenty other Tamil presses, the most influential being Vittiya Vilacam. Owned by Ramasami Pillai, a former librarian at the College, Vittiya Vilacam had an allied public organisation of the same name. According to a government document, these Tamil presses printed just over a hundred books in 1855.[138] Tamil and Telugu publishing also developed more sophisticated business practices, opening bookstores, establishing networks of agents in major towns, advertising an 'in-house list' in their books and selling subscriptions to periodicals. An 1838 publication by the Advertiser Press (owned by V.J. Pereya), for instance, contained this notice as a Preface:

To whom it may concern: on the top floor of No. 53 house, Govinda Nayakan Street, Pettunayakanpettai, Madras, Muttusami Pillai sells a variety of printed Tamil books. For those in the provinces, books may be obtained through post from the above address.

As one Englishman and scholar at the College remarked in 1855, 'They [Tamils and Telugus] have at last discovered that printing is lucrative, and there is now no doubt that the art will prosper.'[139]

In contrast to books, Tamil periodicals and newspapers were not flourishing in Madras at mid-century. The *Crescent* was gone, after it had been forced to publish a good deal of its items in English. *Tina Vartamani*, which reached a circulation of over a thousand, was the most successful Tamil-language periodical before the 1880s, but it was not truly a 'Tamil' periodical. The popularity of this monthly news magazine, edited by the controversial Percival with government money, rested on its publishing items from English-language sources and translating them in a Tamil and Telugu version (*Vartamana Tarangani*). This strategy, converting English-language news into Tamil and running on public support, explains the success of other Tamil periodicals of the period: *Raja Viruttipotini*, the longest-running journal, from the 1830s; *Tattuvapotini* (later *Veta Vilakkam*), supported by the Raja of Ramanathapuram and published by the Veda Samaj in the 1860s; and *Janavinodini* which began in the 1870s.[140] English-language periodicals and newspapers in Madras in the 1850s were roughly equal to their Indian-language counterparts in numbers. Within a few years, however, English would dominate public journalism in the city in the form of the *Madras Times* (1858), *Madras Mail* (1868), *Madras Standard* (1877) and *The Hindu* (1878). It is reported, or rather estimated, that the circulation of the *Madras Mail* and *Madras Times* for 1875 was about 3000 to 4000.[141]

Paradoxically, the modest commercial success of Tamil book publishing at mid-century cut it off from political influence: as Tamil presses printed more books and attracted more readers among the middle classes in Madras and the provincial towns, monolingualism became a successful financial strategy. Gone were the bilingual editions of early Tamil

books: the trilingual *Crescent* had vanished, and the *Fort St George Gazette* published fewer and fewer notices in Tamil and Telugu. As part of this decline, the pundit-publishers, and their successors in commercial Tamil publishing, would not return to the centre of politics until the end of the nineteenth century.[142] Until then, the sphere of Tamil print, particularly periodicals, remained sidelined by English-language publishing. By 1860, those increasingly large number of Indians who wanted to read in English could rely upon a variety of publications that dominated print journalism and public debate; readers of Tamil, meanwhile, were served warmed-over versions in translation. However unreliable circulation and publication figures might be, we know that political influence and economic power resided overwhelmingly with the readers of English books, journals and newspapers.[143]

4

PRINTED FOLKTALES AND THE
NEW VERNACULAR
1820–1860

Pushed to the margins of a print sphere increasingly dominated by English, Tamil had nevertheless changed beyond all recognition from its position in 1800. By mid-century many classical texts (*Tirukkural, Nannul, Civakacintamani,* and parts of Kampan's *Ramayana,* to list only a few) were in print and in several editions; geography, geology and history were taught with Tamil books, and Tamil itself was taught through printed grammars and schoolbooks. Current world events were reported in Indian languages, and official government notices, in stilted Tamil translation, were printed in the *Fort St George Gazette;* soon legal manuals for village officials would also be printed in Tamil. The very look of the language, its appearance on the printed page, was radically different, too; the improvement in fonts, culminating in those used for Winslow's 1862 dictionary, plus the gradual standardisation of orthography and spelling and punctuation, a combination of Beschi's eighteenth-century reforms and Arumukam Navalar's mid-nineteenth-century ones, produced a printed Tamil closer to its appearance today than to that in 1800, barely fifty years earlier. No observer in Madras could be unaware of the influence of print, and some (editors of a 1848 English translation of a traditional Tamil grammar) predicted a spectacular future:

Now, above all, the Tamil language, being brought within the sphere of the Press, can be made to take whatever turn those who are masters of this wonder-working engine of literature are disposed to give it.[1]

The same mechanical image was used a few years later by a Tamil intellectual who called the press a 'mighty engine' and praised it for 'rescuing from oblivion the remnants of the ancient Native literature'.[2]

And yet, although a form of Tamil prose had emerged in print—mostly as Christian writing and early journalism—it struggled to compete with a language already honed by one hundred and fifty years of experimentation in public journalism and prose fiction, with a language, moreover, of opportunity and of power. With the arena of political power dominated by English and English-educated elites in Madras from the 1830s onward, the public role of Tamil (via petitions, newspapers and journals) lost ground to English and continued mainly as translations from English; original Tamil publishing continued to grow, but in the form of schoolbooks and Tamil literary texts it was largely limited to 'native' audiences. Among the diverse responses to this challenge, two paths stood out as proposals for the future of Tamil literature. One path, championed largely by those associated with the MNA and its successors, was a modernising agenda: Tamil should 'perfect' its fledgling prose writing, possibly by natural evolution but more certainly through contact with English. The result, many Tamils and Europeans hoped, would be what they called a 'New Vernacular,' a modern Tamil, modelled on English. The second path toward literary modernity, which was favoured by those whose primary intellectual orientation remained Tamil (pundits and scholars, especially those involved in the early revival of Saivism), was more paradoxical and less deliberate: they believed that by reconstructing and extending Tamil's literary past, partially through the publication of traditional literature, they could stake out new claims in the increasingly competitive politics of language. Tamil would not be 'equal' to English, although its antiquity would approach parity with Sanskrit, but its very difference would underpin a distinct literary identity, and thus create a basis for competing with its rivals.[3]

In fact, both these paths were pursued during the course of the nineteenth century, and printed folktales played a central role in each: tales were thought to provide a model for the new prose vernacular; and those same tales were both taught in schools as examples of traditional

culture and later hailed, especially in English translation, as expressions of a nationalist literature. Leaving that second development for the next chapter, the topic of this chapter is the first: the early history of printed folktales, including their initial publication at the College, their enlistment in the campaign for a New Vernacular and their invocation in nationalist discourse.

When Tantavaraya Mutaliyar sat down in 1825 to put the *Pancatantra* into Tamil prose, however, he was probably not thinking about a New Vernacular. Nor, although he received 1000 star pagodas for his efforts, could he have imagined the success his translation would have throughout the nineteenth century, and beyond. Then in his mid-twenties and Head Tamil Pundit at the College of Fort St George, this editor of old grammars and traditional texts was asked by Richard Clarke, who succeeded F.W. Ellis as Head of the College, to write a Tamil prose version of this famous collection of Indian folktales. Ever since its founding more than a decade earlier, the College had been struggling to fulfil its mission to teach south Indian languages to the Company's junior civil servants. Although the College was charged with the responsibility of educating young civil servants in, for example, Tamil language and literature, the books published in the first years—grammars and dictionaries, mostly in verse and some in Latin—hardly fit this task. The only prose work published by the College before the *Pancatantra* translation in 1826 was a rendering of the last book of the Sanskrit *Ramayana*, but that volume also proved difficult for the newly arrived Europeans. Ellis, under whose leadership the College had been founded and run until his death in 1819, had been primarily interested in classical Tamil poetry and law; as a result, little thought had been given to the pedagogical necessity or literary desirability of Tamil prose.

The possibilities of teaching Indian languages through folktales were first put into practice in Calcutta at the College of Fort William, where Aesop's fables were printed in Hindustani and Bengali in roman script in 1803 (*Oriental Fabulist*); at Serampore in 1814–15 William Carey also prepared and printed Marathi versions of the *Pancatantra* and *Hitopadesa*, plus a collection of Sanskrit tales.[4] In Tamil, the first such use of folktale material was B.G. Babington's English translation

of Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton'; although it was printed in London in 1822, copies were sent to Madras, where Babington was well known in Orientalist circles, not least as translator of the College's publication of Beschi's high grammar, also in 1822. Soon the College requested a further fifty copies of Babington's translation of Beschi's folktale for use by their students.[5] Richard Clarke's decision to ask his Head Pundit to prepare a prose version of the *Pancatantra* in Tamil may also have been influenced by a Tamil translation (based on an English translation) of the *Arabian Nights* published by an Indian-owned press in 1825; again the College purchased fifty copies of this book.[6] Unconfirmed reports claim that even before these translations three other texts of Tamil prose fiction had appeared in print, but even if they had it is unlikely that Richard Clarke knew of them because they were reportedly published by Indian-owned presses for a Tamil-reading public.[7]

Whatever its models might have been, the genius of Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's text was that it struck the right balance between a textbook for European learners and a book for Tamil readers. By contrast, the two translations noted above (from the *Arabian Nights* and 'Guru Simpleton') were targeted almost exclusively at European students: not only were they bilingual, the former also included a phrase-by-phrase translation and the latter an essay on Tamil language and notes on Tamil grammar. Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, too, had students in mind when he explained in his Preface to his *Pancatantra* that he sometimes used the 'spoken language of the educated' so that the Tamil would be 'both clearly understood and entertaining'. On the other hand, as a pundit he did what comes naturally and produced a text with no notes or other aids for learners (although a small list of errata was appended). Nor would Tantavaraya Mutaliyar compose a text, even an elementary one for students, that was undignified. 'Those who embark upon the study of Tamil,' he wrote in his Preface, 'and encounter the existing Tamil versions of the *Pancatantra*, are like those who wish to bathe but find themselves smeared with mud.' His Tamil *Pancatantra*, a book that Europeans could use and Tamils could enjoy, soon became a colonial best-seller; it quickly went through numerous reprints and has never been out of print.[8]

The *Pancatantra* was not the only folktale book that Tantavaraya Mutaliyar prepared for the College. In the same year, 1826, he put together a collection of Tamil folktales under the title *Katamancari* ('Miscellany of Tales'). Unlike the *Pancatantra*, however, this was not a translation but an edited compilation of oral tales in Tamil, and it was more like a schoolbook. The eighty-two tales in *Katamancari* were arranged in order of increasing difficulty; for instance, the first ten of its eighty-four pages had two columns, one with sandhi (joined-up writing without word breaks) and one without, for easier reading. One of the simple stories was this:

One day when a guru was talking with his disciple in his house, he said, 'Disciple! Among your four sons, who is the best?' 'Swami, see that one who is on the roof using a torch to burn down this house! He's the smartest.' Shocked, the guru sighed and wondered just what the other three were like.

Not inspired story-telling, but enough to keep the boys at the College occupied.

A third book of folktales by Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, another edited collection called *Katacintamani* ('The Jewel of Tales'), was published by the College in 1833 (and pirated in the same year by the Karnataka Carittiram Press); these tales were also graduated for learners, and some were more complex and longer than those in the earlier collection. One of the more developed tales is this:

Once a wise man came up to another man, who had many vices, and said, 'You should get rid of these habits, if you don't want to go to hell.' 'I won't drop them,' said the second man, to which the first replied, 'Why not at least give up lying?' The sinner agreed and later that night went to steal from the raja. In disguise, the raja was roaming the streets, looking for thieves; seeing this thief, he asked him where he was going. Because the man couldn't lie, he said, 'To steal from the palace.' 'Can I come?' asked the raja, and the thief took him along, put him outside as a watchman and entered the palace. Opening a box, he saw three gems; realising that he couldn't divide them evenly, he only took two and left one behind. Giving one to the raja and keeping one himself, he departed. The raja went inside, saw the third gem, called his minister and said, 'It seems a thief came last night; investigate.' When the minister saw

the gem still in the box, he kept it himself, and said that all three had been stolen. Hearing that, the raja sacked the dishonest minister and put the honest thief in his place.[9]

This tale is widely reported in Tamil, which is true of the great majority of those in *Katamancari*, including another one discussed below (p. 136). Tantavaraya Mutaliyar favoured riddles (*vitu katai*) and jocular tales (*vetikkai katai*, including Mariyatai Raman tales, Tennali Raman tales, Komatti tales [from Telugu]), presumably for considerations of brevity and simplicity of language; his version of the tale of the reformed liar (given above), for example, is usually two or three times longer in printed form. Although the total body of folktales published by the College pundit represents a good cross-section of the oral tale in Tamil, very few of them can be considered 'Tamil tales' because, like oral stories everywhere, they easily cross linguistic and cultural boundaries and are found not only in south Indian languages but in north India, as well.[10]

These three books by Tantavaraya Mutaliyar were not the only examples of folklore printed in Madras in the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed by 1850, at least twelve books of folktales were in print, in Tamil alone, including translations from English, French and Persian; in Telugu, too, there were translations of the *Pancatantra* and the tales of Vikramarka, both by the College pundit Ravi Pati Gurumurti Sastri.[11] Of these other books, however, only Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton' achieved anything like the success of the Tamil *Pancatantra;* it did not appear in its original Tamil–Latin until 1845, and in a Tamil only edition until 1851, but by then it had already appeared in French and would soon after be translated into Telugu, Kannada, German and again into English, and later, Czech. In the English translation of 1822 (from London, with the Tamil original), Beschi's tale, along with other books of printed folklore, entered the public school curriculum in the Madras Presidency; it and Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's *Pancatantra* were soon hailed as models for a modern Tamil prose. But by mid-century, these folktales, which had promised so much, had been dismissed as silly fabulations and removed from the course of study at the Madras University High School; despite this official rejection, however, they continued to be used in provincial schools and have never lost their appeal to popular imagination.

Although the initial purpose for printing folktales was to help the handful of European students studying Tamil at the College, these books, especially the *Pancatantra*, always had a wider audience in view. In the mid-1820s, Governor Munro laid out ambitious plans for a system of public education; the Madras School Book Society (established in 1820 and later called the Madras Schoolbook and Vernacular Literature Society) stepped in to help the scheme by training teachers. But Munro's plans ended in temporary failure: teachers' pay was low, Munro died prematurely in 1827, and support for Indian education was sidelined by the shift to English-medium instruction in 1835. Nevertheless, and with little help from Fort St George, by 1830 there were more than 12,000 schools, and more than 200,000 students in the Presidency.[12]

Munro's scheme for public education may have failed, but it highlighted the need for schoolbooks in Indian languages, which soon became a topic for public debate. In the 1820s and 1830s Tamil school texts on history, geography, maths and science were printed by missionary presses and Indian-owned presses in Madras; these were considered western disciplines, and Tamil was merely the means of bringing their benefits to school children. When it came to Tamil language and literature, however, the vernacular was more than a conduit; and the printed folktales used to teach those subjects came under closer scrutiny.

Taught in a provincial school, or even in a Tamil-medium school in George Town, the *Pancatantra* was unlikely to stir much public interest. But when, in 1841, Fort St George established the Madras University and printed folktales were included in the curriculum of the Vernacular Department, they entered into the public debate about education and the New Vernacular. Some years before that, a government committee in Bengal had declared: 'We conceive the formation of a vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed.'[13] George Norton, President of the Board of Governors of the Madras University, was more concise: 'A New Vernacular literature has to be created.'[14] But what would a new vernacular literature look like?

In 1839, four years after the official shift to English-medium education, and the same year that 70,000 Indians signed a petition calling on Fort St George to provide them with that education, Governor

Elphinstone announced his plans for the Madras University; it would consist of two branches: a college for teaching higher levels of arts and sciences, and a high school for cultivating English literature and Indian languages. When the 'university' opened in 1841, however, only the high school was in operation; the college, with BA courses, opened only in 1857. Soon after 1841 a preparatory school was also set up for students without sufficient English to enter the high school. In its first year, thirty-five Indian and Eurasian boys wrote exams at the preparatory school, and about a hundred boys wrote them at the high school.[15]

The pedagogical theory behind this experiment in native education was the well-known 'downward filtration'. The central idea was that the vernacular languages could be improved by injecting them with modern knowledge; some Orientalists believed that Indian classical languages could become the conduit for this transfer, but eventually English was chosen.[16] Translations from English into regional Indian languages, it was thought, would modernise those literatures. Once this new serum had entered the bloodstream of Tamil, for example, it would, by its very excellence, inspire imitation and thus the language and literature would evolve slowly but steadily out of primitive superstition into a medium of educational instruction capable of producing a reasonable approximation of Western civilisation. There was more than one version of this idea, however. Everyone agreed that the vernaculars must be improved and that translations from English must do the improving, but it was not clear how the vernaculars, if they were so impoverished in the first place, would be able to receive these translations from a superior language. The 'Bombay School' of Elphinstone and Auckland called for a total and immediate immersion by translation, whereas the Board of Governors of Madras University was not convinced.[17] The legacy of Ellis, Babington and others meant that in Madras any agenda of improvement for Tamil would be leavened with a deep appreciation of its literature.

In their very first report to government, in 1841, the Board of Governors of Madras University set out their reservations about the Bombay method. First, the existing translations were inadequate: 'The shelves of Government Schools groan with the costly translated works, for which there is no demand.'[18] The problem, they said, was that

translators put English works into Indian languages without adapting them to the target audience; these 'slavish' translations', they claimed, were 'absolutely unintelligible' to Indians who knew little English. Instead they recommended 'free' translations, which would adapt English works so 'that they may consist with such trains of thought, which peculiar habits, feelings, and manners have fostered throughout life'.[19] Educationalists in Madras also favoured the cultivation of Indian languages and thus announced a desire 'to begin by some systematic efforts at improving and fertilising the Oriental languages themselves' especially through 'the composition of original, historical, and other works' by 'the more intelligent of learned Natives'.[20] Among these 'other works', the Board had in mind folktales. In their Annual Report of 1841, they listed fifteen translations from English (and one from French) into Tamil in use at the time and added a comment as to their 'demand': of the five translations given the highest rating, four were folktale collections (the fifth was a history textbook).[21]

In later reports the Board of Governors noted the 'superior quality' of the grammatical power and structure' of Tamil and Telugu, and called for the creation of a post of Professor of Vernacular Languages;[22] this suggestion was put into practice a decade later, in the 1850s, with the controversial appointment of Peter Percival, described in the previous chapter. However, until Indian languages had been improved through a combination of adapted translations and original works, that is, until they were capable of receiving higher levels of knowledge, the medium of instruction for 'the substantial knowledge of Europe' would be English. In these years before mid-century, the Board, as well as influential missionaries in Madras, did not dismiss Tamil literature wholesale; following the lead of Ellis and Beschi, they found worthy specimens, especially in ethical compositions, and especially the beloved *Tirukkural*. But neither did they believe that Tamil in its current form could lead to a modern prose fiction or journalism.

To many modernisers in Madras at this time, the chief impediment to a new Tamil literature was its perceived enslavement to poetry. As Gauri Viswanathan has pointed out, this colonial distaste for verse derives in part from a campaign among certain religious groups in contemporary England against the perceived self-indulgence and moral deficiency

of Oriental verse.[23] For many Europeans among the modernisers in Madras, verse was certainly the villain. Even George Norton, supporter of the Madras Hindu Literary Society and ardent champion of Indian causes, had little sympathy for traditional Tamil literature; he was no scholar of Tamil and his opinions would have shocked the Orientalists who founded the College, where he was President of the Board, when he wrote that 'the bulk of all Native writing (which are poetical) contain little else than legendary and superstitious nonsense'.[24] Not only that, the Board of Governors also declared the contents of the poetry

chiefly relate to legends and fictions, as gross, as they are fanciful. Such morality and practical maxims as are taught, are not such as are likely to meet the approbation of European minds, at least—nor indeed of the better portions of the Natives themselves, neither is it to be denied that much is to be found in these works which no other than a depraved intellect could tolerate.[25]

It was not just the benighted subject matter that exercised the Board; Tamil poetry was also said to be composed in a suspect manner of 'complex reduplications of the same words with various, and even contrary, meanings ... and by perversely ingenious artifice'.[26]

The European voices were perhaps the most vocal, but Tamils also joined the movement for a New Vernacular. Although a wide spectrum of Tamils, from pundits to merchants, continued to regard poetry, especially the newly published classical and medieval texts, as the purest form of the language, doubts were now raised about the place of poetry in the emerging literary culture of the nineteenth century. In a Tamil edition of Aesop's tales in 1853, for instance, the translator drew attention to:

the want of a treatise in the Vernaculars of India professing to be a systematic collection of morals in easy prose suited to the capacities of young minds, and calculated to lead them into a virtuous path.[27]

Even more startling was a description of the modernising mission of prose by Vicakaperumal Aiyar, one of the Aiyar brothers who owned Kalvi Vilakkam, the first of the pundit-presses. (He also became Head Tamil Pundit at the Madras University High School and succeeded

Peter Percival as Professor of Tamil at Presidency College). In his elementary Tamil grammar for young students, he wrote:

The English who rule this country, and the other Europeans, have dispensed with teaching literature, grammar, geography, astronomy and so forth through verse form; now they teach their children in clear prose. For that reason, the children of Europe are able to read many books quickly, to discover so much and be capable of doing so much ... In order that the children of our nation do not waste away their lives we must quickly produce books in clear prose ... for use in schools so that they can ... gain the knowledge necessary for all sorts of employment.[28]

This paean to prose from a scholar of classical Tamil texts (including the revered medieval grammar *Nannul*) and organiser of the Viveka Kalvi Salai indicates how deeply the felt need for literary reform had penetrated Tamil literary culture.[29]

The path to literary modernity, according to these modernisers, led away from the poetry that illumined the literary past; the task was to build a New Vernacular in the form of a modern literature of prose— not just any prose, but compositions that were both original and ethical. Although the lack of such works in Tamil (and Telugu) was often noted with despair in the reports from the Board of Governors, this moral and educational gap was temporarily filled by the books of folktales printed by the College. Even Elphinstone had pointed out that although good books are scarce 'there exist in Hindu languages many tales and fables that would be generally read, and that would circulate sound morals', but warned that 'we might silently omit all precepts of questionable morality'.[30] When it opened in 1841, the Tamil curriculum of the Vernacular Department of the Madras University High School consisted of grammar, poetry and 'fables'; in this last category, were taught the *Pancatantra*, *Katamancari* and Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton' (while Telugu students were taught *The Arabian Nights* and the *Pancatantra*). Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's *Pancatantra* was singled out as the proper 'model, both as to spelling and style', while Beschi's prose was held up as 'fit to be a model for this species of composition'.[31]

Nevertheless, the linguistic virtues achieved by Beschi and 'learned

and intelligent Natives' still fell short of the standard envisioned by advocates of a New Vernacular. First, there was the matter of form: the tales might be in prose and, as the Board admitted, approach European models 'by being divided into sentences and even paragraphs', but they were too often written as 'a continuous chain of letters rather than words', that is, with sandhi and without word breaks and punctuation.[32] This flawed but useful prose could supply useful models for translating English works into Tamil, but not forever, and soon other models became available (a Tamil translation of a history of America, for instance) which were considered more appropriate 'to excite [boys'] interest and to afford real information'.[33] By the mid-1850s, the printed folktale had fallen out of favour with the authorities at Madras University, who now scorned prose works in Tamil as 'generally silly, or at least uninstructive Tales and Fables'.[34] In short, the prose tales were not prosaic enough.

But by mid-century a more serious charge had been laid against the folktales: their contents were ethically questionable. Considered little better than the self-indulgent verse they were intended to replace, the folktales were a target of moral denunciation by British civil servants and missionaries, only some of whom could actually read them. In particular, the Glasgow-born missionary, writer and educationist John Murdoch led a personal campaign against the use of Hindu story literature in government schools in the Madras Presidency.[35] In his valuable if limited survey of printed Tamil books (1865), he expressed his anxieties in a revealing passage:

Another most injurious influence exerted by some Hindu tales is, that they virtually inculcate INFLUENCE BY DECEIT [capitals in original]. The lesson has been taught to apt scholars. As a nation, the Hindu glory in the fox-like cunning, with which they so often outwit their bovine European rulers. The conscience of the people will never be right until it is felt that all trickery is bad and despicable. The *Panca Tantra* contains many stories of the objectionable character now mentioned. They should be carefully weeded out of any selection used in schools.[36]

Murdoch was the most vociferous and persistent critic of Indian tales, but he was not alone in his opinions. Several years before the above passage was published, for example, an expurgated *Pancatantra*

was being taught in the provincial schools in the Madras Presidency.

Nor did Murdoch reserve moral criticism for the *Pancatantra* or for prose works alone. He maintained that a Telugu collection of ethical poems (*Niti Sangrahamu*) recommended lying in certain circumstances, while a similar Tamil text (*Nitineri Vilakkam*) was condemned because it included a reference to a woman's waist 'as tender and narrow as the beautiful young stem of a flower'.[37] *Katamancari*, the collection of folktales published by the College in 1833, did not escape Murdoch's notice, either. Of its eighty-two tales, he honed in on one as an 'example of successful trickery spiced with indecency'.[38] The offending tale is a very popular story, still told in Tamil today, in which a man gets excited when he watches a woman lift her sari to cross the river, noting a mole on her thigh; he then falsely claims and wins her as his wife. Citing this story, Murdoch fulminated that it was 'most disgraceful that the British Government should print books, and teach them in the schools, showing how to overcome by deceit'.[39] His indictment was broad: government schoolbooks contained not just indecency and lying but fatalism, idolatry, pantheism and suicide, as well.

Counter-attacking, the government rejected Murdoch's judgement on classical Tamil literature, arguing that they 'must deprecate any meddling with Tamil classical authors simply because they contain in common with every classical literature in the world passages descriptive of female beauty, or passing allusions to Predestination, to transmigration, to mythology or religion'.[40] As for the folktales, they did not attempt to defend the examples of 'indecency' or 'deceit' cited by Murdoch. Instead they maintained that the *Pancatantra* was no longer in use and that the *Katamancari* had never been sanctioned as a schoolbook but had only been 'reprinted because it was required for certain civil examinations'.[41] Neither of these claims was true, and in the end the government duly noted but did not act on Murdoch's accusations.

Nevertheless, Murdoch did win some support among his contemporaries; if his accusations of indecency were wide of the mark, those of deceit struck a chord with others. Again, the *Pancatantra* was his primary target: 'Englishmen,' he wrote, love 'manly straightforwardness ... and few things will more militate against the formation of such a character than the study of a book abounding in examples of *successful*

trickery.'[42] No less a respected scholar than Robert Caldwell, author of the famous grammar of Dravidian languages (1856), agreed that the *Pancatantra* was 'saturated with a tricky morality' and added that it was 'an exceedingly clever, amusing book, but one which tends I fear rather to lower than to raise the tone of the morality prevalent in the country'.[43] Nor was deceit said to be confined to south India, since Murdoch noted that the *Pancatantra* only confirmed Macaulay's characterisation of Bengalis: 'What horns are to the buffalo ... deceit is to the Bengalis.'[44]

These missionary-scholars may have had difficulty in distinguishing deceit from invention, but they were certainly not ignorant of the tales told in this famous folktale collection: 'The fox,' Murdoch once observed with despair, 'is on the whole the hero of the book.'[45] Indeed, when we recall these tales in which predatory crocodiles are outwitted by crafty monkeys, we can appreciate why some British colonialists viewed them with suspicion. These animal allegories are the only literary genre in which the characters regularly consume each other, and in the colonial context the potential for political satire was not far below the narrative surface; although, as discussed in the next chapter, that reading needs to be supplemented by others.[46]

Even before Murdoch's campaign, as we know, printed folktales had been subjected to public scrutiny by the Board of Governors of Madras University and were judged to have provided only a partial redemption from poetic depravity; but by mid-century, they had altogether fallen from grace among university authorities. Since the 1820s, when the College Press first printed them, until the mid-1850s, folktales had occupied a prominent place in the curriculum of the College and later in that of the Vernacular Department of the University High School. After 1855, however, only the expurgated *Pancatantra* was taught. When the University proper began in 1857, even that text was absent from the BA course in Tamil, although it was used for a short time for the Telugu BA and in Presidency College, which succeeded the High School.

No amount of moral condemnation, however, could dislodge the *Pancatantra* from provincial schools or the popular imagination. It was reissued, reprinted, pirated and imitated in countless editions, both in the official, bowdlerised version and in private, complete versions,

throughout the nineteenth century. Murdoch himself admitted that it was the most frequently prescribed prose work in the university;[47] and an Inspector of Schools reported that the Telugu version was taught 'in every school in the Telugu country'.[48] Even in the twentieth century, by which time the missionary fire had dampened, the expurgated Tamil version continued to carry a whiff of controversy, which the Tamil editor of an 1921 edition explained with well-chosen words:

Each fable in this book is intended to teach some particular precept for human conduct, and in some cases the lesson taught is not of the highest ethical standard. To the eastern mind this is not so perceptible as to the western mind and consequently the work is underestimated.[49]

In the early twenty-first century, a much-edited version of the *Pancatantra* is still taught in many primary schools across Tamil Nadu (and its individual tales continue to live in oral tradition). The morally ambiguous contents of this most popular book of Indian fiction may have worried the reformers in the nineteenth century, but no one ever doubted that Tantavaraya Mutaliyar had written a fine piece of prose. Defying zealotry from all corners, his *Pancatantra* of 1826 became the first Tamil best-seller.

His *Katamancari*, and to a lesser extent his *Katacintamani*, were also taught in local schools but not as widely. A tiny reprint of *Katamancari* was published in 1864 for 'use in special schools' and as late as 1932 it was reprinted as a Government schoolbook (including the scandalous tale of the exposed thigh). Beyond such uses in schools, these folktales were also popular as general reading, and were published in independent editions throughout the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth. After the 1950s, however, both *Katamancari* and *Katacintamani* fell out of fashion. The other important example of printed Tamil folklore, Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton', has, like the *Pancatantra*, achieved a long print life but with a more specialised following as a literary tale. First printed for teaching purposes in the 1820s, it soon gained a wider readership after its first Indian edition in 1845 in Pondicherry; later, it became even more well known when it was printed in monolingual Tamil editions in a periodical (*Tinavartamani*) and then included in

a popular miscellany (*Vinotaracamancari*, 1871). *Paramartta Kuruvin Katai* (its proper title) has never been out of print since.

Despite their permanent hold on the popular imagination, printed folktales never completely fulfilled the demands of the campaign for a New Vernacular; they may have been written in prose, but their language and their contents were still too mired in tradition, and too morally dubious. On the other hand, the campaign for a modern prose was not entirely unsuccessful. Several popular translations from English into Tamil, the actual filter of the filtration theory, appeared after mid-century and many were successful as textbooks. In the 1860s and 1870s, the Madras School Book and Vernacular Literature Society (successor to the Madras School Book Society) published a number of these translations, including biographies of Lord Clive and Christopher Columbus, essays on architecture, the history of the steam engine and Lamb's tales from Shakespeare. Original prose works in Tamil, which these translations were expected to stimulate, however, were nowhere in sight. The lack of a New Vernacular was deplored in both English and Tamil newspapers and journals right up to the end of the century. The breakthrough finally came with the appearance of not the 'first' but the first good novel in Tamil, Rajam Aiyar's *Kamalampal Carittiram*, between 1893 and 1895.[50] The author, a young Brahmin with a BA in English from Madras Christian College, produced a successful piece of prose fiction, with sharply observed characters, believable dialogue and humour, all within a modern setting and limited time-frame; the plot is complicated and requires some suspension of disbelief, but it had shaken free of the mythic–romantic framework of its predecessors. Here was original prose writing, with neither the controversial morality found in some traditional texts nor the leaden moral advocacy (against child-marriage, caste, etc.) of other early south Indian novels, although it had a social theme—the corrosive effects of rumour upon a marriage. The novel, which drew on folklore (proverbs, folk speech) but not folktales, remains a favourite among Tamil critics today.

In summary, the results of the campaign for a New Vernacular were mixed: good translations appeared and a modern Tamil prose, including

fiction and journalism, developed but only late and their sources were as much English as indigenous. Even if original Tamil works disappointed and appeared late in the day, the campaign was at least successful in convincing Tamils that a new prose literature was necessary and possible; the leading spokesmen for a New Vernacular were British administrators, but the call for literary reform was heeded by Tamil pundits and writers, too. As already noted, Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's folktale collections showed some, but only some, attention to the requirements of a new prose form, and others produced grammars in prose. By the 1850s, however, as demonstrated by the statements (quoted above) from the Tamil translator of Aesop and from Vicakaperumal Aiyar, the respected pundit and publisher, the impulse for reform had moved out of the College, and European circles, and into the wider literary culture of Madras.

Tamil, however, was not to be the language of reform. The anti-missionary campaign of the pundit-presses had some success: the Bible was not taught in the Madras University, for instance (but neither was there a Professor of Tamil in Madras University until 1948).[51] However, when that anti-missionary protest gave way to the new politics, illustrated by the MNA and the campaign for a New Vernacular in the 1850s, English emerged as the dominant language of public protest. For its part, the movement for a New Vernacular produced a cruel irony: its ambition to improve and modernise Tamil required English models, which only contributed to the headlong rush toward English education, language and literature that pushed the local language and literature, including folktales, outside the university and public politics. Publishing in Tamil raced on, but was sidelined into schools and traditional literature. Textbooks were a lucrative business; from 1875 to 1876, for example, approximately 140,000 schoolbooks were printed in Tamil alone.[52] Outside this secure market of textbooks, general Tamil publishing exceeded English books by a ratio of three to one, but those books more or less continued along the lines established by the pundit-publishers of the 1830s and 1840s: classical texts, minor genres of praise-poetry, folktales, popular fiction and drama—precisely the kinds of texts that the reformers condemned as superstitious or silly or immoral. Although these Tamil textbooks and classics were numerous,

political and public discourse, generated by English-speaking graduates from the English-medium universities and colleges, was increasingly dominated by English.

A Tamil press would only resurface as an effective voice in public politics at the end of the nineteenth century, when Tamil leaders in Madras realised that they needed to communicate with a larger section of the population. This realisation came to the founders of *The Hindu* during a tour by its editors in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu; when these university-educated Brahmins found that their paper was not widely read in the provinces, they launched a Tamil paper, *Cutecamittiran* ('Friend of Swadeshi') in 1881: by 1899, it became the first daily in Tamil. This resurgence of Tamil journalism occurred as part of the broad development of Dravidian movement and Tamil nationalism. Many dimensions of that development—political, intellectual, literary, linguistic—have been described and analysed by others, and in the next chapter I will add one more: the link between folklore and the nation.

5

FOLKLORE AND THE NATION
1860–1880

Although folktales carry multiple layers of meanings, and are variously received by hearers and readers, we, as scholars, must attempt our own reading; my own recent interpretation of the Tamil oral tale tradition, as recorded in the late twentieth century, highlights their moral vision.[1] When situated in the historical context of nineteenth-century Madras, that vision is refracted to reveal other dimensions of the tales, one of which is their political significance. As John Murdoch feared, the tales in the *Pancatantra* may be seen to present an allegory of wily Indians who outfox their 'bovine European rulers'; however, I doubt that many Indians, except for a few political activists, would have read them that way. Folktales do have political significance, but I want first to emphasise that a main source of their enduring popularity lies in their potential for social satire directed within Indian culture, in their ability to satisfy the human desire to see the small triumph over the big, and to do so cleverly, by the only weapons tale-tellers possess: words and wit. Although the printed folktales involve a mixture of folktale genres—*Pancatantra* stories are fables, or animal allegories, while the others (*Katamancari, Katacintamani* and Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton') consist largely of humorous tales—the moral vision of all these stories is little different from that expressed in the mainstream folktale tradition of Tamil, in which animals are replaced by human beings and long, complex plots unfold. In these hundreds of ordinary folktales, again and again, we hear of the poor and weak overcoming the rich and powerful, of Brahmins lampooned, Chettiyar merchants fooled and

husbands cuckolded. If this social satire is common to folktales in all forms, printed tales in the nineteenth century were also invested with political significance; but, and this is where I differ from Murdoch's reading, that meaning rested not so much in their anti-colonial narrative as in their pre-colonial existence.

As expressions of pre-colonial culture, folktales (and other forms of folklore) were central to the conflict between tradition and modernity that dominated cultural history in the nineteenth century; although this tension has a long history, it crystallised in the grand debate between Orientalists and anglicists in the first decades of the century and then, as European cultural forces penetrated deeper and deeper into Indian life, it stimulated cultural revivals and underpinned nationalist discourse at the end of the century. As others have shown in detail, the concepts of 'tradition' and 'modernity' were themselves fiercely contested in the nineteenth century (as they are today), and that controversy cannot be easily summarised; the many reimaginings of tradition included movements to classicise, to Hinduise, to indigenise, to sanitise and to anglicise.[2] As Vasudha Dalmia has argued in her extensive analysis of the 'Hinduisation' of culture in north India, representations of colonial modernity were inseparable from reinventions of tradition. Her observation underlines what we know about all sets of polarities—that they are interdependent. In the context of the nineteenth century, this meant that a colonial 'modernity' could only be understood over against Indian 'tradition': tradition supplied the 'before' scenario in the colonial diagnosis of civilisational progress. This mutual dependence of supposed opposites created an ambivalence toward tradition: it must be altered yet retained. Rammohan Roy, perhaps the greatest of early Hindu reformers, expressed this reform-and-retain attitude when, in 1833, he condemned Hindu 'idolatry and superstition' because it was 'contrary to the ... principles of the ancient books and authorities'.[3] A generation later, the most influential of Tamil Saiva revivalists, Arumukam Navalar, although more agitated than his Bengali counterpart by missionary attacks on Hinduism, similarly proposed that Saivism be purified by reviving its ancient texts and eliminating later-day corruptions (such as animal sacrifices and the

worship of malevolent deities).[4] This ambiguity concerning tradition, which ran underneath the various reconstructions of the past and differing agendas for reform, is the starting point for the argument developed in the discussion that follows.

This chapter also highlights the role of folklore in the debate on tradition, modernity and nationalism in nineteenth-century India. Although folklore has received relatively little attention in scholarly discussions of this debate, I hope to show that it was at the core of the controversy. It was as pre-colonial, traditional literature that the tales had been viewed right from the beginning of the nineteenth century; they were first brought into the public sphere through print as reflections of Indian tradition, but later they were condemned precisely because they reflected what were increasingly considered reprehensible features of that tradition. I will argue that this discourse about folklore was characterised by the same ambivalence found in the wider debate about tradition and modernity.

Alone among students of Tamil literature and history, A.R. Venkatachalapathy has examined the role of printed folklore in nationalist thinking in the early twentieth century, with an emphasis on appropriation and sanitisation.[5] More squarely in the period under discussion in this book, writers on Bengali have drawn attention to the tensions in the relationship between nationalism and folklore. Tapti Roy, for example, has observed that nationalism needed to include popular culture but only in an edited version.[6] In a more widely cited study, Chatterjee also noted an internal contradiction in the discourse on 'modernity' in late nineteenth-century India: a private, national sphere, which appropriated and sanitised tradition, was defined against a public, Western sphere; as a result, the search for a postcolonial modernity involved a rejection of modernity.[7] A similar conflict, I believe, bedevilled public views toward folk tradition: on the one hand, folklore represented what modernity would have to leave behind; on the other, it supplied the materials for constructing a nationalist identity.

As pre-colonial tradition, folklore served to define, by counterexample, a colonial modernity. Throughout the nineteenth century, and before, folklore was high on the colonial list of what needed reform

or abolition in Indian society. Alongside sensational social practices (sati, child marriage, ban on widow remarriage) and heathen idolatry, oral narratives were also targeted by missionaries, colonial officials and some Indian reformers. Folktales, legends and myths were forms of Oriental superstition at best, and of immorality at worst. We have already read the condemnations of oral tales by Europeans in Madras; similar judgements were passed on a variety of traditional texts, including historical legends, puranic histories and literary histories. Commenting on Tamil texts composed in the early modern period, which he labelled 'Cuddhe [*katai*?] histories' and which are mostly ballads and historical legends, Walter Elliot, a prominent British official in mid-century Madras, noted that 'modern poets have intermixed fables with Truth in these Histories of the Rajahs'.[8] Writing a decade or so later, the Tamil scholar Chitty Simon Casie was frustrated in his research by the available texts which displayed the 'fictitious and ornamental additions such as oriental imagination delight in'.[9] In the same period, even Sanskrit texts, as historical sources, were dismissed by a Bengali Professor of Sanskrit as 'full of legends and fabulous tales'.[10]

As these examples show, the fables and fabulations that reformers wished to purge from Indian literature and history represented a mixture of both classical and folklore traditions. But even so, again as Chatterjee notes, the nationalist project appropriated popular culture and then sanitised it, removing what was considered improper for a public audience. This is the nub of the colonial ambivalence toward folklore: it was condemned as vulgar, but valorised as popular. Sanskrit epics and philosophical texts may have been at least partially susceptible to the purifying touches of the Hindu revivalists, if not to European reason, but folktales would require more severe remedial action; not just the exposed thighs, which Murdoch noted, but also their coarse speech and unsavoury characters limited their potential role in the nationalist project of creating a colonial modernity. Suitably transformed in English translation, however tastefully selected and skilfully packaged for an Indian audience looking for authentic symbols of traditional culture untainted by colonialism, folktales would play a role in nationalist discourse in the second half of the nineteenth century. As we will see shortly, two

constructions of folklore and the nation emerged in Madras after mid-century. Even in these reinvented forms, however, printed folklore never became a major vehicle for Indian nationalism; that honour lay with older, more archaised literary texts.

In the end, printed folklore failed as a vehicle for nationalism, I believe, because it is too local, too familiar to serve such a public cause. Other literary forms (love poetry, for instance) also have a personal touch, but none has the cultural intimacy of folklore, whose revelations are not the insight of a single author but the cumulative perceptions of a group. Nor are all forms of folklore local or equally local—proverbs, for instance, may express a generalised wisdom—but most oral genres, as 'artistic communication in small groups', speak with a familiarity that brings a spark of recognition from hearers and readers.[11] This is perhaps most obvious for shorter oral forms—jokes, local idioms, dialect words, slang—but it is also true for longer narrative forms. In Tamil, for example, legendary histories of local temples and their gods and goddesses, which are sung in festivals, refer to details of place and geography known to local residents; some of these ballads tell personal histories, the lives of individuals known in a village or a family. A personal touch is also present in Tamil folktales, despite their wide geographical distribution; when finishing her story with the conventional wedding scene, a woman teller often points to her sari and says, 'I was at that wedding, and they gave me this sari!'[12] Whether as speech, behaviour or belief, folklore represents a shared tradition, or at least a recognition that it is shared, which is a key criterion for a shared identity.

This familiar, personal side of folklore helps to explain the ambivalence shown toward it. On the one hand, these legends, idioms and tales speak with a familiarity that allows one to feel—this is mine, my village, my caste, my region; like language, folklore is thus seen as a repository of local culture and a means for shaping local identities. On the other hand, and because of that very familiarity, folklore can also be considered too revealing; associated so often (if wrongly) with our childhood and village, folklore can be seen as a badge of backwardness, of the habits, beliefs and speech that mark us as uneducated, even superstitious. The familiarity of folklore thus creates ambivalence—it

is seen as a source of both embarrassment and nostalgia—and this double-sidedness explains why in nineteenth-century Madras folklore was first invoked in nationalist discourse and then abandoned. These attitudes, however, are not in any way peculiar to south India or India since folklore across the world engenders similar ambivalence. Nevertheless, the history of printed folklore and nationalism in India differs from its counterpart in Europe.

Folklore and nationalism in Europe

As an expression of indigenous, pre-colonial culture, folktales were put at the service of a nascent nationalism in late nineteenth-century Madras, and elsewhere in India. Before describing this last episode in the history of printed folklore in colonial south India, however, it is useful first to consider this coupling of folklore and the nation in comparative perspective; in fact, such a consideration is necessary since Indian ideas linking folklore and nationalism derive, in some measure, from Europe. Roughly one hundred years before similar events in India, folklore revivals in the late eighteenth century underpinned nationalist sentiments in many parts of Europe. Although these European movements did not directly cause or lead to similar developments in south India during the colonial period, they were part of the intellectual background of the British folklorists who played a part in popularising folktales in Madras, as elsewhere in India. Cultural currents also flowed in the other direction since oriental tales, including those from India, were well known to European intellectuals who first used folklore to imagine the nation in that continent.

Leaving that flow of ideas from India to Europe to the next chapter, I summarise below the European ideas that contributed to constructions of folklore and the nation in colonial India. Although striking differences distinguish the three cases described—in Germany, Finland and Scotland—the commonality is that in all three folklore was invoked in nationalist movements. We can also identify two dominant propositions in those constructions, which appear in India too: linguistic antiquity and purity, and cultural subjugation. These claims were not entirely

invented—they arose from a sense of loss—but these histories were given a definite burnish when folklore was advanced as a basis for nationalism in Europe and colonial India.[13]

The German states were the primary source of ideas that led to movements in which folklore was put to the service of European nationalism. In the late eighteenth century, the poet Johann Gottfried von Herder developed his theory of the 'folk' and especially folk poetry, which he claimed was a repository of national memory and an expression of the national soul. When this theory of 'one land, one tongue, one nation' was embellished by Romanticism, it inspired intellectuals all over Europe to search for folk literature amid the upheavals of the early nineteenth century. At home in Germany, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, sons of a lawyer, began to collect traditional tales in the first decade of the century, shortly after Napoleon's invasion of the western German states; Cassel, the Westphalia city where the brothers worked as librarians, was in fact ruled by Napoleon's brother. Though hardly colonialism, this French domination, with its perceived threat to German language and culture, provoked the folklore movement led by the Grimms. In fact, they published their classic *Kinder-und Hausmarchen* (1812–15) in the years the French invader was defeated and the Congress of Vienna was set up to establish the new order in Europe; Jacob, who had been sent to Paris to retrieve books and paintings which the retreating French soldiers had carried away as booty, attended the Congress where he met V. Karadzic, the Serb nationalist who was one of the great folklore collectors in Europe. Although the Grimms' folktale collection sold poorly in its first edition, after substantial revisions (the tales were given a literary touch, retold for children and illustrated), the book proved a phenomenal success, going through seventeen editions and countless translations. Its national mission was assured when in 1850 it entered the curriculum of elementary schools in Prussia.[14]

Following Herder's lead, the Grimms claimed that their heavily edited tales were expressions of a pure and ancient Germanic culture. In their Introduction to the first edition, they stated that their collection of tales was 'purely German in its origins and has not been borrowed from any sources'.[15] Purity, in the context of early nineteenth-century

Germany, meant non-French, and Napoleon was not the only source of contamination; his invasion was seen by many German intellectuals as a political extension of a literary domination represented by a series of fairytale books written at the court of Louis XIV. To the Grimms, this French courtly artifice threatened German folk purity: 'There is nothing more difficult,' they wrote, 'than using the French language to tell children's stories in a naïve and simple manner, that is, without pretentiousness.'[16] Antiquity was the other criterion in the Grimms' definition of authentic folklore:

These folktales have kept intact German myths that were thought to be lost, and we are firmly convinced that if a search were conducted in all the hallowed regions of our fatherland, long neglected treasures would ... help to found the study of the origins of our poetry.[17]

Not just old, the tales were also a hidden treasure, buried under layers of alien culture; they were championed not simply as expressions of a virtuous German peasant culture but also as remnants, as literary antiquities that spoke more ancient truths. This combination in the tales, a purity and an antiquity obscured by foreign subjugation, established their rightful claim to represent German national identity.

Soon after their publication, the Grimms' tales were read right across Europe, including far-flung Finland, where another folklore movement lent credibility to a nationalism, and one which eventually led to a new nation. Unlike Germany, Finland was a colony, under the cultural and political domination of Sweden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; from the perspective of the Swedish aristocracy, the Finns were backward, almost alien, and their language (a member of the Uralic family) definitely incomprehensible. Finnish nationalists, who had read Herder as well as the Grimms, built their movement around the very badge of their presumed inferiority: Finnish language and literature. Their resources were scarce—before the eighteenth century, only a few Finnish books were in print, but then a large collection of proverbs was published. And a century later, the Finns had something more substantial as a literary foundation for their independence movement.[18]

In the 1820s a medical student named Elias Lönnrot began to collect specimens of old Finnish poetry which he would later assemble into a national epic. Predictably, Lönnrot collected in the Karelia region, the most isolated part of Finland where old dialects were preserved. In 1835, after five long field trips, he had amassed enough material to publish his text, which he called the *Kalevala*; Lonnrot later added more and more verses, until the epic exceeded 22,000 lines.[19] The rambling narrative centres on the hero Väinämöinen, who rules Kalevala ('the land of the heroes'), defending it against supernatural enemies. Here was the monument to Finnish literary and cultural history that the nationalists had been waiting for, and it was immediately seized upon and christened the 'national epic', a status it enjoys to this day.[20]

By the time Lönnrot's epic appeared, Finland had been handed over by Sweden to Russia, which only deepened its humiliation. But the epic was the starting point of a new Finnish pride and it showed in print: in 1835 there was only one Finnish newspaper, by 1885 there were thirty-one, and by 1900 there were eighty-six.[21] Finally, after the chaos of the Russian Revolution and a violent civil war, Finland became an independent country in 1918. Herder's vision of land, language and nation, in this case authenticated by a massive, reconstructed epic, had triumphed.

The first nationalist movement in Europe, however, occurred within the British Empire, in the Celtic fringe of Scotland and Ireland in the late eighteenth century. In her excellent study of this development, Kathy Trumpener explains that it was primarily antiquarian, provoked by the political realities of English occupation masquerading as Enlightenment programmes.[22] In this British colonial context, the textual tools of nationalism were not those we have seen at work in Germany and Finland; not the folktale or 'folk' epic, but two modern genres—the 'nationalist tale' in Ireland and the 'historical novel' in Scotland—were used to reimagine a national past. Just before these texts appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, however, we have a more familiar if remarkable example of folklore fashioning the nation. In 1759, James Macpherson published his translations of heroic poems,

which he claimed were composed by Ossian, a blind Gaelic bard from the third century. In the teeth of English occupation of the lowlands, and the decline of Scots language, the Scots could now listen to and read the lost story of their ancient nation. As Trumpener points out, even the poetic cycle itself is a narrative of loss: at the end, with all his heirs dead, Ossian mourns the passing of the oral tradition which praises the heroes of the past.[23] While this famous case of 'fakelore' was enthusiastically received in Scotland and translated into many European languages, at least one Englishman was not convinced.[24] In his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), Samuel Johnson dubbed Ossian an 'improbable fiction' (an accusation that was subsequently proved correct).[25] Stung by more insults from Johnson and other Englishmen, writers in Scotland and Ireland fashioned a nationalism around the figure of the bard, whose loss they lamented in nationalist tales and historical novels.

Trumpener's analysis of this 'bardic nationalism' is valuable because it sheds light on the link between folklore and the nation. In explicating the paradox of a nationalism that is antiquarian, she takes Benedict Anderson to task for defining nationalism too narrowly as a modernising project, relying on individualism and a homogeneous notion of a national community created and sustained by newspapers and other forms of print capitalism. Bardic nationalism, she argues, presents a more complicated psychology of modernity and loss.[26] In particular, she identifies the psychic trigger that is cocked by the suppression of tradition in the rush to modernity: to the extent that cultural traditions are denied or reviled, to that extent they grow into potent symbols of nationalist identity. Although she does not use these terms, this is the process that links folklore to nationalism. As we have seen in the case of Germany, Finland and Scotland, in contexts of cultural and political domination, language is often the object of derision and suppression; and the narrative forms that are ridiculed because they are traditional, such as folktales and epics, become the natural vehicles for nationalism. Indeed, suppression and derision only enhance their status as stories of a lost national past.

Folklore and nationalism in India

Although these European histories were not replicated in the subcontinent, they throw into sharp relief the key elements of movements that would link folklore and the nation in India. As in the European cases summarised above, Tamil, in the second half of the nineteenth century, had the necessary textual tools (a traditional literature in print) and the required psychological impulse (a perceived loss of tradition) to express nationalism through folklore. Further, a colonial context, especially the moral crusades against tradition, and a pre-colonial history of conflict with Sanskrit increased the perception of cultural traditions under threat; and, as in Europe, this sense of loss sought restoration in texts of purity and antiquity. Finally, underlying these Indian movements is the ambivalence toward folklore: as a lightning rod for the critique of tradition, it was also a potent symbol for a nationalist identity.

The ideas connecting folklore and the nation in Madras converged slowly over the course of the nineteenth century (and some of their intellectual sources are evident in the preceding century). As we know, folktales entered the public arena of print and schools in the 1820s, but as a cultural category folklore did not enter into public debate until after mid-century; and it finally found expression in nationalist discourse only in the 1870s. In the discussion that follows, I will focus on constructions of folklore and the nation in Madras, but similar ideas emerged across British India, though primarily in the other two metropolitan centres. I have just mentioned the preconditions for these constructions—textual tools, psychological impulse and colonial context—but there are other, more specific factors that contributed to their emergence in the 1870s. That decade was marked by new political protests and new national organisations such as the Arya Samaj, the Indian Association, the Central National Mahommedan Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha; but the concurrence of two literary and intellectual developments in that decade had a more direct bearing on linking folklore with the nation. The first was a shift in literary

historical sensibility; the other was the arrival from Europe of folk-lore as a modern science.

In the 1870s, new modes of historical writing began to trace the contours of the nation; in addition to historiography and historical novels in Indian languages (primarily Marathi and Bengali), scholars also began to write the first literary histories of Indian languages.[27] Like historiography, literary historical writing in Indian languages pre-dates colonialism, but it was written mainly as hagiography or as anthologies of verses of select poets. The first truly modern literary histories in Indian languages, utilising periodisation and substantial biographical data, appeared only in the last third of the nineteenth century, although these experiments relied on earlier work, some of it in European languages.[28] Most of the literary histories of India produced in European languages before the 1870s were themselves limited; de Tassy's two-volume study of Hindi (1839–46) is the exception, but it, too, was revised and enlarged for a second edition in the early 1870s.

In Tamil, medieval hagiographies of poets and a later anthology preceded the first English-language compilation, *Biographical Sketches of Dekhan Poets*, which appeared in 1829 in Calcutta. The author, Cavelly Venkataramasvamie, who had assisted Colin MacKenzie in collecting historical manuscripts in south India, compiled biographical summaries and a few illustrative verses of classical Tamil (and Telugu) poets.[29] Thirty years later, Simon Casie Chitty, a Tamil Christian in Ceylon, expanded the list in his *The Tamil Plutarch*, published in Jaffna. Chitty himself explained that he nearly gave up the effort because accurate historical documentation of the literary past was impossible to find; but then he turned to 'the traditions current among the people', which he found to be more verifiable than written sources.[30] However, the first Tamil work that approaches a modern literary history was published in 1886, again in Jaffna by a Tamil Christian, J.R. Arnold (A. Catacivam Pillai), with the title *Pavalar Carittiram Tipakam* (and an English title, *Pavalar Chariththira Theepakam, or the Galaxy of Tamil Poets*). Arnold enlarged the earlier list of poets by including authors of newly discovered texts, which stretched Tamil literary

history back several centuries, and also a few poets from the nineteenth century.

This rediscovery and printing of lost Tamil classics at the end of the century spurred several other studies in Tamil literary history; but the first truly modern treatment was published only in 1904, and it required a second edition in 1929 to complete the task. *Tamil Literature*, a college textbook written by M.S. Purnalingam Pillai, Professor of English literature at Madras Christian College, is emphatically divided into periods and presents a master narrative, inflected through the Dravidianist notions of an ancient past corrupted by northern influences and later redeemed by Tamil saviours.[31] These experiments in literary historiography in Tamil, and other Indian languages, omitted oral literature, but they did draw new attention to the place of literature in history and thereby stimulated thinking about the literary past. With the rise of nationalist thinking in the 1870s, it was only a short step to conceive of a 'national literature', a literary definition of the past which would include folklore.

But 'folklore' first had to emerge from indecent tales and improbable legends into a more credible source for constructing cultural identity. The reinterpretation of folklore was assisted by its arrival in India as a modern science in the 1870s, the time that anthropology, too, arrived; though allied to that discipline, folklore followed a different colonial history.[32] European ideas about folklore had come to India before this, of course, with British civil servants and missionaries in the early years of the century. Although the English word 'folklore' was not coined until the 1840s (as a 'good Saxon-compound' instead of the French-derived 'popular antiquities'), these early Orientalists would have been aware of the concept of the *volk* and the Romantic nationalism that was stirring up Europe during the very period in which they were setting up an empire in India. As we have seen for south India, they encouraged the publication of folklore material in the first half of the century, primarily tales and proverbs for language learning and schools; several publications in this early period also encouraged the study of folklore as history and ethnology: Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*

(1829), Stephen Hislop's *Papers Relating to the Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces* (1866), and journals such as the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1832–) and the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science* (1822–66). But only in the 1870s did folklore become established as a field of research in India.

At the centre of that development was the *Indian Antiquary*, established by James Burgess in 1872 and published in Bombay. In the inaugural issue of the journal Burgess wrote that the scope of the journal would cover 'Manners and Customs, Arts, Mythology, Feasts, Festivals and Rites, Antiquities and History'—which reads like a contemporaneous definition of folklore in Europe.[33] He also stressed that the journal would be 'a medium of communication between Archaeologists in the East and West', promising to publish the latest research from Europe and America, often in translation, so that Indian scholars would benefit.[34] Looking through the large and closely printed pages of the early issues of the journal, one finds not hundreds but actually thousands of entries, some very brief, others several pages long, of folklore collectanea, such as proverbs from Sindh, snake worship in Bengal, and charms and spells in Madras. With a few notable exceptions, the contributors were Europeans, mostly British civil servants and missionaries, but the journal did put folklore into the public domain in India.

A second conduit for information about folklore research in Europe and India was the Folklore Society of London, founded in 1878. Unlike the *Indian Antiquary*, its journal, *Folk-lore* (1878–), was not much read in India, but its pages were nevertheless filled with Indian material and its exclusive focus on the discipline of folklore stimulated research in India. Among it contributors were the two towering figures of Indian folklore research in the nineteenth century. William Crooke, who was President of the Folklore Society from 1912 to 1913, served in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh; Crooke wrote and edited several books on Indian folklore, the most influential being his two-volume *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (1894).[35] The other man was Richard Carnac Temple, who was born in India in 1850 and studied at Cambridge before returning to India where he held various military and civil appointments. Temple's major work, in addition to essays on folklore method and theory in the Society's

journal, was his three-volume *Legends of the Panjab* (1884–1900); he also served for some years as co-editor of the *Indian Antiquary*.[36] Both men also influenced the public face of folklore in India through the journals they founded and edited in the subcontinent. Temple's *Punjab Notes and Queries* (1883–7) and Crooke's *North Indian Notes and Queries* (1891–6), the first folklore journals in India, published hundreds of notices on folklore sent in by Indians interested in this emerging field of study.[37]

Running parallel with Temple's and Crooke's careers, more and more collections of folklore, especially folktales, were published. The very first true collection of Indian folktales, *Old Deccan Days* by Mary Frere, was published in London in 1868 but then translated into Gujarati and published in Bombay in the same year. The early 1870s saw English-language publications of major collections of tales and proverbs in Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil and so on. Indian-language collections also proliferated during the same period; the catalogues of printed books in Bengali, Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi, contain page after page of books listed as 'tales and fables', most of which first appeared in this crucial decade.[38]

The convergence of these two developments in the 1870s—a new sense of literary history and a public recognition of folklore—repositioned folk tradition as a respected part of indigenous culture and a symbol of a pre-colonial identity. Although ideas linking folklore and the nation were expressed across British India, they were most articulate in the three metropolitan centres. Madras is discussed below, Bombay had the *Indian Antiquary* and several intellectuals, but the most prominent revival of folklore in nationalist discourse occurred in Calcutta.[39]

Here, in the capital of British India, where swadeshi was already in the air in the 1860s, Bengali intellectuals and writers had access to British ideas about folklore through the Asiatic Society's journal and through books, including Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, published in Calcutta in 1872. Given this intellectual context, it is not surprising that the first published collection of Indian folktales by an Indian was written by a Bengali (L.B Day's *Folktales of Bengal*, London, 1883) or that, looking ahead, the first folklore journal run and edited by an Indian

began in Calcutta (*Folklore*, 1956–]. The linchpin of the connection between the folklore revival and early Indian nationalism, however, was the Tagore family.[40] Throughout the 1870s, they staged *melas*, which included the display of folk arts and crafts, folk theatre and popular songs. Rabindranath Tagore, who lived in England for two years at the end of the decade, began to collect what he considered to be disappearing folk genres—ballads, nursery rhymes, legends and myths. In 1894, he gave a famous lecture entitled 'Bengali National Literature' and he formed the Bengali Literary Society (Bangiya Sahitya Parisad), which was dedicated to the preservation of Bengali literature, including folklore. A few years later, in 1897 and 1898, Tagore published two volumes of stories, mostly rewritten from oral sources. In Calcutta, as in Europe, folklore was revived and rewritten by intellectuals as an act of restoration, to preserve a national identity in an era of foreign cultural domination.

In Madras, although the various strands of nationalist thinking that emerged in the late nineteenth century have been well described, ideas linking folklore to nationalist thinking are not so well known;[41] and they were formulated differently to those in Calcutta. In fact, two separate constructions of folklore and the nation emerged in Madras toward the end of the nineteenth century, although both rested on claims of purity, antiquity and loss. The first of these formulations drew heavily on a feeling of cultural subjugation and emphasised the notion of a 'buried Dravidian' culture. This sense of loss among Tamils was historically deeper and socially wider than among Bengalis, attributed not just to British colonialism but to brahminical–Sanskritic domination, as well; Tamil's long literary and cultural history, which had evolved largely outside the north Indian mainstream, thus provided fertile ground for the construction of a 'folk' identity for the non-Brahmin population. The second Tamil formulation of folklore and the nation, which arose from a less ideological and more personal sense of loss, invoked the image of the 'vanishing village'.

Historically, the first of these formulations in Madras was that which constructed a folk identity for non-Brahmins, including Untouchables; and it was largely articulated by Europeans, who echoed the earliest European writing about Tamil literature and language. When Beschi wrote 'Guru Simpleton' in the eighteenth century, he claimed that

the language of folktales represented not the artifice of later Sanskrit-influenced Tamil but rather the concision of its ancient literature.[42] These inchoate ideas—that ancient Tamil was pure and that it was closer to the spoken language than to the Sanskritised idiom which had defiled it—were the foundations for a later, more complete construction of a folk identity for non-Brahmins and their literature.

In the early nineteenth century, for example, these ideas were extended and given greater authority by F.W. Ellis, the influential administrator and brilliant linguist, who founded the College of Fort St George and first demonstrated that Tamil was independent of Sanskrit. Acknowledging that he intended to follow Beschi's lead in revitalising Tamil, Ellis also equated purity with an absence of Sanskrit influence: commenting on a late medieval Tamil poem, Ellis wrote that 'the language is remarkable for its purity and for its intelligibility, being but little intermixed with Sancrit'.[43] As Collector of Madras, Ellis later wrote essays which laid down firm foundations for constructing a folk identity for non-Brahmins. In his 1818 document on land rights, as Eugene Irschick has shown, Ellis shored up his political base among the landowning castes (Vellalas and others) by identifying them as primordial sons of the soil;[44] this was a perfect illustration of the European definition of the 'folk' as peasant, caught midway in the evolutionary scheme between 'barbarism' and 'civilisation'. In another essay (published posthumously in 1827), Ellis extended his ideas about non-Brahmin civilisation to the domain of Hindu law; south India, he claimed, has a separate and distinct legal tradition, whose primary principle is that 'local custom frequently supersedes the general rule of law'.[45] Ellis was referring here to the *Smriti Candrica*, a law text which was published by the College in 1815 with his encouragement.

Ellis' and Beschi's ideas were elaborated a little later by Robert Caldwell. Not only did Caldwell systematise Ellis' 'Dravidian proof' in his famous *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family of Languages* (1856); he also followed him in championing the language, literature and religion of non-Brahmins, while not endorsing all their religious practices. More specifically, Caldwell joined both Beschi and Ellis in locating pure and ancient Tamil within a colloquial speech supposedly unaffected by northern influences: 'The speech of the very lowest classes

of the people ... accords to a considerable extent with the classical dialect in dispensing with Sanskrit derivatives.'[46] Writing almost half a century after Ellis, Caldwell also had the opportunity to comment on printed folklore; and he reported favourably, observing that the prose of Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's 1826 *Pancatantra* marked the beginning of a modern Tamil literature, 'an entirely new style of composition ... [of] good colloquial prose', which was in a struggle with poetry for the 'mastery of future Tamil literature'.[47] But Caldwell also went much further than his predecessors in his anti-Sanskrit, anti-Brahmin rhetoric; at one point in his grammar, he declared that in Tamil 'few Brahmins have written anything worthy of preservation', and his book on Nadars in Tinnevelly District claimed that northern influences had obscured and defiled a primordial Tamil tradition.[48] Caldwell also extended the category of non-Brahmin to include Paraiyars, the lowest among the several Tamil Untouchable castes. Ellis, the administrator, had supported the Paraiyars' claim to be 'sons of the soil', but Caldwell, the missionary, confirmed that these people were in fact the original Dravidians.[49]

Caldwell's writings were not always complimentary toward the castes whom he identified as the indigenous Tamils; his descriptions of the Nadars, for instance—a numerous caste with low ritual status—as degraded and heathenish, prompted heated rebuttals from Christian converts and Hindu Nadars alike. As the research of Robert Hardgrave, and others, has demonstrated, the intention of these responses by Nadars, who propounded new origin myths, invented etymologies and constructed a glorious past, was to claim that they once enjoyed high (warrior or *ksatriya*) status before later-day historians and commentators (Indian and European) managed to 'vitiate our tribal honour'.[50] These Sanskritising moves, which were initiated by many other castes in south India toward the end of the nineteenth century, are pertinent to our narrative because they illustrate the awkwardness with which folk tradition was regarded. For the Nadars, their traditional practices of ballad singing, spirit possession and animal sacrifices ('devil worship' in Caldwell's terms) were embarrassing markers of backwardness; yet, those traditions, once suitably sanitised, also supplied the basis for a reconstruction of their 'tribal honour'.

The folklore element in this construction of non-Brahmins as the

'folk' was then made explicit in two books by missionaries published in the formative decade of the 1870s. *The Folk-songs of Southern India* is a collection of Tamil poetic texts, from as early as AD 500 and mostly attributed to non-Brahmins; many are the compositions of the Siddhas, who wrote a wide range of texts, from medical treatises to mystical poetry; but they are best, and most conveniently, remembered for the poems that ridicule caste and ritual. Charles Gover introduces his book with a touching image, recalling both Scottish and Finnish folk nationalisms, of a Dravidian bard:

There can be few more pleasant scenes than when, in the cool of an evening, the dasa [singer] enters some quiet country village ... The villagers are just returning from the fields, weary with their labours ... and the word is quickly passed round that the singer has come ... They sit on the ground before the bard and wait his pleasure.[51]

Gover describes the songs included in his book as pure Dravidian compositions which 'dwell in the national heart'; only 'episodes from the great epics and the erotic chapters' have been omitted, he explains, because 'both are purely Brahmanic, entirely foreign to the Dravidian literature and mind'.[52] Gover then invokes the potent image of the buried past in explaining that these songs, or 'folk literature' in his words, have lain undiscovered, obscured by layers of brahminical legend and deceit. No matter that these poems are densely composed texts—because they are non-Brahmin, to Gover they are 'folklore'.[53]

One of the key 'folk-songs' in this anthology is an extract from *Civa Vakkiyam*, a roughly 500-stanza poem composed by the Siddhar Civakkiyar, probably in the fourteenth century. One of the first in Tamil to use anything like common language in a literary text, the poet rails against the folly of caste distinctions and senseless practices such as the worship of stone idols and ritual bathing; god, the poet argues, lives within the heart. His repudiation of textual authority and proclamation of an egalitarian vision belongs to an old Tamil tradition of religious mysticism allied to a social critique, echoed in medieval Kannada Virasaiva poetry and continued in Tamil by Civakkiyar and other Siddha poets in our period, especially in the poetry of Ramalinga Swami (1823–72). Civakkiyar's famous question, 'What is caste?' was repeatedly

asked in the Dravidian movement, especially in the speeches of E.V. Ramaswami.[54] It is also heard in Tamil folklore; Muttuppattan, a Brahmin who falls in love with two Untouchable women, attempts to persuade their anxious father that social and ritual categories are no bar to marriage: 'Caste?' the love-sick Brahmin asks. 'What is caste? Only a confusion in the mind.'[55]

Another major text in Gover's anthology is the *Tirukkural* (c. AD 500), which is far from colloquial speech and much older than the Siddha poems but also more memorisable. This collection of moral maxims has always been one of, if not the, best-loved texts in Tamil; its pithy sayings are quoted in the home, school and political platform. During the nineteenth century, the *Tirukkural* took on a new role as the essential text in a construction of a folk identity for those groups cast as 'Dravidians'. Until the rediscovery and publication of the ancient Sangam poems in the 1880s, it was considered the oldest extant Tamil text, composed before northern influences were said to have produced rigid caste inequality, priestly domination and ritualised superstition—precisely the elements that some Tamils had protested against and which the missionaries wished to reform or remove. The value of the *Tirukkural* was not that it railed against these practices, which were yet to consolidate, but that it presents an ethical system largely devoid of them.

Although the author, Valluvar, was probably a Jain, in popular Tamil legend he is a Paraiyar, at the very bottom of the caste system in Tamil society; the 'Untouchable Sage', as he was sometimes known in European writings, is often said to be born of a Paraiyar mother and Brahmin father. As far as we know, Valluvar was not blind, like the bard of Scottish nationalism, but as a low-caste poet whose pure and ancient text was suppressed by northerners, he became the emblem of a Dravidian-as-folk concept; as the personification of a 'buried Dravidian culture', he was valorised by every major writer on Tamil literature in the nineteenth century. Gover, for example, was convinced that the attempt to give Valluvar a Brahmin father was nothing 'but ... literary fraud'; 'strip the story of its Brahmanical element', he said, 'and we learn that Tiruvalluvar was a member of a low Dravidian caste'.[56] As an expression of a pre-Sanskritic, Dravidian moral system, the *Tirukkural* and other 'folk-songs'

became scripture in a new south Indian religion, which some missionaries equated with Protestantism; to them, these texts revealed a 'silent Reformation', 'a scheme more moral than religious, in which idolatry is unknown, and the divinity is always spoken of as the great soul of the universe'.[57] This newly constructed non-Brahminical religion, shorn of priest-ridden idolatry and centred on the low-born poet Valluvar and his *Tirukkural*, became the acceptable face of Hinduism to many Europeans.

Gover was the most dramatic but not the only European to express these ideas in Madras in the 1870s. A second missionary text published in that same decade is *Tales and Poems of South India* by E.J. Robinson.[58] Noting parallels between Tamil folktales and Aesop, Robinson outdid his colleagues in claiming an antiquity for Tamil: 'Cities conversed in it before the Christian era, and as might be inferred from its beauty and finish, it possesses an ancient and honoured literature.'[59] Hinting, in fact, that its origins might stretch back as far as the Old Testament, Robinson also added to the consensus that pure Tamil was non-Brahmin and claimed that the language 'existed in perfection long before Sanscrit mingled in its stream'.[60] Robinson's collection resembles Gover's in its variety of Tamil texts considered 'protestant', including the obligatory *Tirukkural*, but he also included genuine folktales, which Gover did not.

Most of the tales in Robinson's book were lifted and translated from Tamil editions of *Katamancari* and *Katacintamani*, which establishes a direct line of descent in the history of printed folklore in Madras. The opposition, drawn by Gover and Robinson, between Dravidian folk literature and Sanskrit was further refined by Robert Charles Caldwell (son of Rev. Robert Caldwell), who wrote: 'The non-Aryans of Southern India cannot for a moment vie with their Aryan masters in the mighty arena of the Epic or the Drama. But I do not think that any Oriental language possesses a richer collection of Folk-songs than that which is the especial glory of Tamilian literature.'[61]

This first construction of folklore and the nation, centred on non-Brahmins as folk and the image of a buried Dravidian culture, was not confined to Madras. The very first, and very influential, book of Indian

folktales in English, is a case in point. Published in London in 1868, *Old Deccan Days* is a collection of south Indian tales collected by Mary Frere from her servant. In the Introduction, Frere's father, a former Governor of Bombay, situates the tales by explaining that they are not Marathi but Lingayat, 'the tribe, or rather sect' of the teller, which is 'a more ancient race, and an earlier wave of immigration, than most of the Hindoo nations with which they are now intermingled'.[62] The tales are particularly valuable, he goes on to explain, because they reveal 'the popular non-Brahminical superstitions of the lower orders' of the southern Deccan, which is virtually unknown to the outsider.[63] This popular religion, he adds, has little in common with the Hinduism known in books but 'still holds its ground against Brahminical innovations'.[64]

Even outside India, influential European scholars writing on India resorted to the image of the 'buried Dravidian'. In his 1869 history of India, for instance, J. Talboys-Wheeler wrote that 'Old Hindu civilization' would be understood only when its heavily Brahminised layers were 'stripped off'.[65] By the end of the century, the idea of a Dravidian culture obscured by Aryans was repeated by folklorists, ethnologists and linguists all over India; Crooke's 1894 study of folklore and religion in north India, Risley's 1901 *Census of India* and Grierson's 1906 monumental *Linguistic Survey of India* all accepted the notion of the Dravidian race as pre-Aryan.[66] The layers obscuring Dravidian folklore were generally held to be brahminical, but it was not long before someone would claim they were Muslim as well; John Murdoch, scourge of indecent folktales, claimed in his Introduction to an 1881 edition of the *Pancatantra* that these folktales offered insight into 'Hindu thought before it was subjugated by foreigners and their 'Mohammadan oppression'.[67]

This formulation of a folk Dravidian nation, largely built up by British writers over the course of the nineteenth century, resembled the European ideas discussed earlier. The social identification of non-Brahmins, from Vellalas to Paraiyars, as sons of the soil, echoed the European definition of folk-as-peasant; and the historical narrative of a lost purity and antiquity, especially the forgotten bard and his songs,

recalled the central tropes of romanticism in a nationalising Europe. And lastly, the image of a Dravidian culture obscured by northern culture resembles the perception of German folk culture under French domination, and Finnish folk culture under Swedish. Once assimilated to nineteenth-century south India, these ideas corroborated much older suspicions about Tamil literary and linguistic heritage; at least five centuries before European contact, Tamils had imagined an ancient and pure Tamil—especially in the verses of the low-born Valluvar—to be corrupted later by northern influences; for example, the *Tiruvalluvamalai* (c. AD 1000) contains this verse (attributed to Kotamanar):

Brahmins recited the four Vedas, fearing it would lose power if written down, but Valluvan's *Kural* can be recited by the learned and the common alike, and never lose power even though it has been written down.[68]

The later commentary to this verse adds: 'Brahmins maintained control over the Vedas, [but] no one controls the Kural.' These early Tamil notions, recast in terms of race and nation by British writers, elaborated by neo-Saivism and then shored up by the rediscovery of ancient Tamil texts, were fundamental to Dravidian nationalism at the end of the century.

Almost simultaneously, a second formulation of folklore and the nation was expressed in Madras, this time almost single-handedly by a Tamil scholar. Tamil had no Tagore, although the poet Subramania Bharati (1881–1921) played a comparable role on the regional level; Bharati is sometimes put forward as a proto-, or crypt-folklorist, but, although his poetry draws on folk metres and forms, it is equally inspired by Shelley and Keats and Hugo; he did not collect or study folk narratives either.[69] It was not Bharati but the polymath Natesa Sastri who advanced folklore as a national literature in Madras. In contrast to the caste orientation and long historical perspective of the first formulation, Sastri's approach, which was both more personal and more scholarly, centred on the image of the vanishing village.[70]

Pundit S. Makalinga Natesa Sastri was born in a Brahmin family in 1859. He began his formal education at Kumbakonam College, an institution which, as already mentioned, was at the centre of a network

Pandit Natesa Sastri.
Source: Cardew 1908.

linking traditional pundits with the new literary culture in Madras. Later Sastri obtained a BA at Madras University and then secured his first appointment in 1881 with the Archaeological Survey of India, which had moved south to Mysore in 1874. Sastri served as assistant to its Director, Robert Sewell, with an initial salary of thirty rupees a year; but when Sewell recognised his knowledge of Sanskrit, which he had used to translate inscriptions, he raised Sastri's salary to seventy-five rupees and gave him the title of 'pundit'. Over the next twenty-five years Natesa Sastri served in a wide variety of government posts and locations, until his death in 1906; attending a temple festival at the Parthasarathi temple in Tiruvallikeni in Madras, he was run over by a horse and taken home, where he died of his wounds, leaving behind his wife and eleven children. In his short life, Natesa Sastri lived up to his pundit billing by writing twenty-four books, including translations from Sanskrit and Shakespeare and a series of six original novels. His earliest writings, however, were about folklore, and it is as a folklorist that he is remembered.[71]

If Sastri read the Gover's and Robinson's books on Dravidian folklore and culture, one imagines that he would have been amused; certainly he did not endorse their racially defined categories of folk and folklore. Sastri's ideas about folklore were shaped instead by the *Indian Antiquary*, by its editor Richard Carnac Temple and by the Folklore Society in London. Whereas Gover's notion of Dravidian-as-folk resembled early nineteenth-century European nationalist thinking, Sastri's reflected European ideas about culture in the second half of the century: he was less concerned with an ancient past buried under racial/civilisational suppression than with a living yet gradually vanishing oral tradition. Salvaging the past has always been a strand of folklore research, but in tune with the research of his own time, Sastri wrote little about the social base of folklore and more about its textual histories. Sastri's cosmopolitan, comparative perspective appears to be a wholesale importation from contemporary thinking in folklore circles in England, but it was inflected through the context of late nineteenth-century Madras. Although this pioneering Indian folklorist was not

active in the nationalist movement, he was sympathetic to its ideals and was the first to present folklore as a national literature.

Sastri's first book was a four-part collection of Tamil folktales, *The Folklore of Southern India* (1884–93); it was published not in Madras but Bombay, where Temple edited the *Indian Antiquary*. As Sastri explained in his Preface to part 3, when he read that journal in connection with his post at the Archaeological Survey, Temple's articles in the journal made him 'utilize my early knowledge of folk-tales in the advancement of folklore literature'.[92] Soon he corresponded with Temple, who encouraged him to translate his tales into English and publish them; they first appeared in the pages of the *Indian Antiquary* and then as a book in four parts in both English and Tamil editions. In addition to these tale collections, Sastri published four other books of Tamil folklore: two translations of long folk narratives (*Matanakamarajan Katai*, and *Nalu Mantiri Katai*), a translation of the shorter tales of the trickster Tennali Raman, and a compendium of essays on folk customs, all in English. He also published thirty-three brief notes on folklore in the *Indian Antiquary* and *North Indian Notes and Queries*, covering the full gamut of genres as even a few titles reveal: 'Buried speaking treasure', 'Omens in Madras', 'Tamil riddles'.[73]

Sastri's writings gained him a measure of international recognition, especially at the Folklore Society in London; and Temple was not his only contact at the Society. One of his translations, *The King and his Four Ministers* in 1889, was introduced and annotated by William Clouston, an influential member. Sastri was proud of his connection to the Society, and the front material in some of his publications, as well as his obituary, announced that he was a member; according to Society records, he was not officially a member, but he was certainly accepted by the Society as an international folklorist.[74] Natesa Sastri was in fact the first true Indian folklorist.[75]

Sastri's initial book, his translations of folktales called *The Folklore of Southern India*, became his legacy. While the four parts were being published in Bombay between 1884 and 1893, the tales appeared in two Tamil volumes in 1886 in Madras. Some of the tales were also reprinted in 1890 in London under the title, *Tales of the Sun, or Folklore*

of Southern India, by Mrs Howard Kingscote; they were reissued in 1908, soon after his death, in a single volume, and they still appear from time to time in their English translation.[76] These tales, as we know, were not the first Tamil folktales in print, nor the first in English translation, but they stand apart from their predecessors because they represent the narrative complexity of the Tamil folktale tradition—and because they were translated by a man who knew how to tell a story.

When Sastri said he had an 'early knowledge of folk-tales' he refers to his childhood, and his personal account of how he acquired that knowledge is revealing. In a Preface to the third part of *The Folklore of Southern India,* he tells his readers that folktales 'had a great fascination' for him and that he spent many hours listening to women in his village [a Brahmin *agraharam*] tell tales.[77] Because his mother died when he was young, 'every story-teller in the village would readily comply with the poor orphan's request for a story', he added. Fortunately, his step-mother, 'unlike the step-mother of fiction', was also an excellent tale-teller, to whom he dedicated one of the Tamil volumes of these tales;[78] the other Tamil volume he dedicated to his deceased mother. Before he was even ten years old, the future folklorist had not only heard but had also begun to tell nearly all the folktales told in his village: 'It was the greatest pleasure of my boyhood,' he wrote, 'to amuse knots of eager listeners of about the same age as myself with side-splitting tales.'[79] These tales told to amuse his young friends are likely to have been the humorous stories about Tennali Raman rather than the long, more complex tales about princes and princesses; but given that the number of tales told in any one village is likely to exceed a hundred, and that many of them have convoluted plots, his storytelling talent, even allowing for some exaggeration, was surely remarkable.

Soon, however, when Sastri went to college in Kumbakonam and then to university in Madras, his knowledge 'had to lie dormant, for more serious studies intervened', as he put it.[80] The tales had made a deep impression on him, but now, at university, he felt their loss: 'As I got older and learned English ... even in my leisure time, I was unable to recollect them and forgot them almost completely.'[81] Forgot them, that is, until he was inspired by reading about folktales in the *Indian*

Antiquary and was encouraged by Temple to write down his childhood tales in Tamil; during his visits to villages and towns as part of his work for the Archaeological Survey, he heard new tales and wrote them down, too. When he announced his intention to bring out a book of the tales, 'some friends mocked and laughed ... saying, "What good is a book like that? It's a waste of time!" '[82] But Sastri was undeterred and dismissed his friends' ideas as 'a great mistake', adding:

Today, in London, the capital of England, there is a Folklore Society. What is its aim? To prevent old tales and other ancient things from disappearing, and to collect them properly and to publish them and thus protect them. And to thus do good, for by means of these tales we can learn about our forefathers' customs, dress, and imagination.[83]

For Sastri, the village was vanishing, and his defence of folklore as a salvage operation is indistinguishable from apologia written in Europe at that time.

Despite his international connections, I believe that Sastri's personal experience, as revealed in these statements, is the key to understanding his construction of folklore and the nation. His childhood loss of folklore is replicated in the national loss: his learning English and getting an English education which then cut him off from his deep knowledge and pleasure in folktales is writ large in the colonial experience. By his own account, modern education placed a wall between him and his youth, when he had learned his tales, and his was not a unique experience. Since the 1840s, anglicising forces had been displacing folklore, which spoke in Tamil and other Indian languages; the once-popular tales were condemned as immoral and dismissed from the university. Nearly half a century later that loss could be articulated in broader terms because by then the vanishing village was a national experience.

In *The Dravidian Nights Entertainment*, published in 1886, Sastri explained that his object in bringing out this translation of a long tale was to demonstrate that Tamil folk narratives were 'in no way inferior in their richness of thought, soundness of morality and luxuriance of imagination' to those of other Oriental languages.[84] He lamented that 'our national stories' have been neglected, not least by Indian scholars

and the Indian public. He was, however, heartened to read 'in the *Indian Antiquary* that a countryman of ours has taken up that interesting subject [folklore] in Western India', and Sastri hoped that his book of Tamil folklore would bring similar publications 'to the platform of the Hindu public'.[85] Sastri's belief that a nation is defined by its folklore is expressed again in a later book on humorous tales, which he introduced by observing that '[e]very nation, whether ancient or modern, has had and continues to have its own peculiar wit and humour'.[86]

The idea that 'national characteristics' are revealed in folklore was not original to Sastri—it was common among European folklorists and it was recognised in Calcutta—but he was the first in south India, if not in India, to articulate the idea of folklore as a national literature. It struck an immediate chord in the Madras press, and almost without exception the many reviews of Sastri's folktale books endorsed the proposition that a nation is defined by its folklore. For example, the longest of these reviews began by observing that:

Contributions to the published folklore of any nation are always valuable. In every country it is to the fable, the household tales, and the common songs of the people that we must look for the earliest and most trustworthy manifestations of the people's real thoughts and characteristics.[87]

Exactly what 'nation' was revealed through folktales, however, is never clear either in Sastri's writings or in the critical reviews. At times it appears to be 'India', at others 'Tamil' and still others 'Dravidian', a variety which reflects the confusion about concepts of the nation and identity in south India at the time. A Dravidian nation defined by folklore, the formulation proposed by others but never endorsed by Sastri, was favoured by some reviews. The *Madras Weekly Mail*, in the review quoted above, for example, said that '[t]he difficulty of getting at the genuine feelings and thought of the people through the formidable barrier of Brahminical influence is what makes contributions to the folklore of this country especially valuable.' 'Mr. Sastri,' the reviewer continued, had 'unearthed' the 'national character' of the 'Dravidian mind'.[88] *The Madras Times* considerably expanded the borders of this nation when it wrote that the Tamil tales illustrated the contrast between

'the East' and Europe in their emphasis on the 'marvellous'.[89] The *Madras Standard*, on the other hand, stated that '[e]very nationality in India has its folklore' but chose to view the tales as representative of the 'Tamil-speaking' nation.[90] Finally, as evidence that Sastri and his books reached beyond India, even beyond England, a German review in the *Dorpat* appeared to concur with this narrower construction of the nation by remarking that 'of the different races which inhabit India each one has its own peculiar tales ...'[91]

Whether the nation revealed was Indian, Dravidian or Tamil, there was no doubt that folklore was 'native' and not 'foreign'. Again, the long piece in the *Madras Weekly Mail* drew the line of demarcation sharply: 'Foreign influences get to work so speedily,' it warned, 'that care is always necessary to distinguish the indigenous article [from] the importation' in order to identify 'the real folklore'.[92] Other reviews spoke of the tales as 'the truest embodiments of the native wit' and of 'the Hindu modes of feeling and living'.[93] Even the *Madras Christian College Magazine* joined in by saying that the study of folklore 'can hardly be regarded as the province of the foreigner—it is specially suited for the natives themselves'.[94] However broadly or narrowly the nation might be conceived, the consensus was that folklore cordoned it off from colonialism.

Although Sastri was not a political nationalist, neither was he politically unaware; in bringing folklore to the 'platform of the Hindu public', as he said was his aim, Sastri knew folklore would share that platform with the Dravidian nationalism that was emerging during the 1880s and 1890s, when he published his folklore books. As a folklorist, and a Brahmin, Sastri did not equate folklore with non-Brahmins, but it is striking that he used the term 'Dravidian' in the title of many of the Tamil editions of his books. He also took principled stands in his politically polarised times. A very revealing incident is described in an anonymous, posthumous biographical sketch of Sastri; sometime during 1884–5, when he was an employee of the Archaeological Survey, Sastri spoke up before the Public Service Commission in defence of Indian applicants, an 'independence', added the anonymous writer, which prevented the young man from the professional advancement 'to which

his scholarship and great qualities fully qualified him'.[95] This was the year, we should note, that the Mahajana Sabha, forerunner to the Indian National Congress, first met in Madras, and only a few years after the appointment of Muttuswami Aiyar as the first Indian judge on the Madras High Court had politicised south Indians as never before. Several years later, in 1900, when Sastri wanted a *nom de plume* for his first novel, he chose 'Swadesamitran' ('Friend of Swadeshi'), the name of a Tamil-language newspaper that had become the outspoken mouthpiece for nationalists in Madras.[96]

Pandit Natesa Sastri's legacy, however, was not political but literary. He brought folklore to public notice in south India and gave it a new legitimacy as an expression of national culture, but his books did not determine the ultimate direction of nationalist politics. The best assessment of his influence, and one which most closely reflects his own sensibilities, is found in the last critical notice of his folktale book, written after his death. Introducing an 1908 edition of the tales, A.G. Cardew praised Sastri for collecting 'stories which circulated from mouth to mouth in the days before the printing press had substituted written for oral composition'.[97] His reputation, the editor wrote, would rest 'on the rescue of these popular tales from oblivion'.[98] Sastri not only rescued those tales but also edited them according to prevailing literary tastes. The fact that the *Pancatantra* was published by government only in a bowdlerised version would not have been lost on Sastri, who admitted in his Preface to a 1900 edition of tales that he had omitted two stories because they were 'too vulgar for children'.[99] Yet Sastri was not a moral crusader, no John Murdoch in pandit disguise, and although he admitted that the tales are 'deficient' in that they appear 'incredible', he also believed that 'they are evidence of popular tastes and for that reason interesting'.[100]

Sastri's double-sided assessment of folklore—popular yet lacking credibility—is a good example of the ambiguity expressed by other Tamil and European elites in this period in Madras. Above all else, however, Sastri understood the power of folklore imagined as the nation; no other form of cultural expression was so undeniably 'native', so undefiled by foreign influences, whether identified as north Indian

or colonial. In this differentiation of the indigenous from the external, both constructions of folklore as the nation that appeared in the last decades of the century in Madras resembled their European parallels. While one construction, primarily articulated by Europeans, emphasised the purity and antiquity of the language and literature of a suppressed group, Natesa Sastri had no need to take the long historical view nor to restrict his idea of folklore to specific castes. For him, the vanishing village was a personal memory. As with the Germans and the Finns and the Scots, the oral traditions vanishing in the advance of a foreign culture were his own.

In the end, however, folklore did not become an important vehicle for nationalism in Madras, or anywhere else in colonial India. Among the leaders of the Dravidian movement, only M.S. Purnalingam Pillai appears to have shown any interest in folklore; before he wrote the first comprehensive literary history of Tamil (in 1904), he published a small book of tales.[101] Despite folklore's impeccable native credentials, which were bolstered in the south Indian context by the Dravidian argument, and despite its emotional pull as a memento of childhood, Natesa Sastri's tales were eclipsed by indigenous literature of a higher pedigree—the Tamil classics of the Sangam period. Against those classical texts, folklore's claim on historicity was found wanting and its morality more suspect than before. Both folktales and classical texts provided possible literary paths to a nationalist identity in Madras because both were believed to represent a pre-Sanskritic, pre-brahminical and pre-colonial past. But, as modern scholarship pushed aside traditional models, as legend gave way to western notions of 'history', the timelessness of the tales was less credible than the (more-or-less) datable antiquity of the classical texts. Even by mid-century, Tamil scholars, such as Simon Casie Chitty began to dismiss legends and local histories as 'fictitious'. From the 1880s onward the rediscovery and publication of Tamil poems from the early centuries of the common era provided a new source of purity and antiquity for Tamil nationalism; even Valluvar's *Tirukkural*, which had been anthologised alongside 'folk-songs' and oral tales, was upstaged by this older corpus of exquisitely composed poems about love and war. Other Tamil classics, some as old as the ninth century (*Tiruvacakam*)

and some as popular as Kampan's *Ramayana* (twelfth century?), had been in print since the 1840s, but this newly printed, ancient stratum pushed Tamil into near-parity with Sanskrit and inspired a new historical understanding, as illustrated in such titles as *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* and *Tamil India*. The ancient poems might not have had the popular appeal of tales, but they still supplied one essential ingredient of nationalism by representing a 'buried Dravidian culture'.

In addition to, and partly as a consequence of, its great antiquity, Tamil classical literature was also considered to represent a higher level of civilisation; folklore, on the other hand, was tainted by suspicions of immorality and primitiveness. Almost from the beginning of its public career in print, as we have seen, folklore was viewed as morally suspect; the most strident attacks came from British missionaries, but Tamil elites also voiced concern. Even its most ardent champion, Natesa Sastri, was constrained to clean up his tales because he thought them 'too vulgar'.[102] M.S. Purnalingam Pillai, a leading voice in the Dravidianist movement, felt a similar unease about folktales: in his Preface to *Witty Stories* (1897), the author explains that he wanted 'to excavate them and remove their rubbish crusts and serve them pure to the Tamil-reading population of India'.[103]

The other charge against folklore—that it was primitive—also dogged it from the beginning of its history in print. Folklore undeniably represented pre-colonial culture, but that strata of culture was one which some modernising and English-educated Tamils in Madras increasingly wished to leave behind; as 'peasant culture', a European definition well known among Indian elites, folklore was associated, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with backwardness. The most influential reformers after mid-century, from Arumukam Navalar to Ramalinga Swami to Subramania Bharati, condemned traditional practices as superstitious and ignorant.[104] But folklore faded from the nationalist agenda not so much from vicious attacks as from gentle abandonment. Rajam Aiyar, author of the first modern novel in Tamil, positioned his story between the village (Brahmin *agraharam*) and the metropolis of Madras; and although folk speech is admired in the novel, tradition is symbolised by a Tamil pundit who is lovable, but

risible and ultimately irrelevant. So too folklore by the turn of the century.

Endowed with a greater antiquity and purity, plus a higher civilisational status, Tamil classical texts pushed past folklore into the role of nationalist literature. Without the protective mantle of 'literature' and scholarly respectability, folktales were mere village stories, vulnerable to moral crusades by missionaries and potential sources of embarrassment for educated Indians. Tales represented the 'bad' past: beliefs and practices without philosophical dressing, bawdy humour, caste stereotypes and sexual pleasures, even enjoyed by women who went unpunished. The tales also contained the 'successful trickery' that missionaries excoriated— verbal deceptions, puns, pretence, half-truths and outright lies. While the *Pancatantra* could claim a Sanskrit pedigree, and like Beschi's tale, could be said to at least straddle the spurious divide between literature and folklore, the oral tale, told then and today, in colloquial Tamil, or even in print, was outside the literary pale. Other Tamil texts, from the earliest Sangam poems up to early modern puranas, also contained morally objectionable themes, but most of these texts entered the public debate on literature toward the end of the nineteenth century in Madras; many were not even known until the turn of the century or remained unpublished until the twentieth century. Printed folktales, however, had been taught to British officials, used in universities and schools, and then brought into wider public exposure through English translations.

In Madras, Calcutta, and elsewhere, folklore would again be invoked in nationalist discourse in later periods, especially during the populist movements of the 1920s–1930s, as well as in the wake of Independence; and in Tamil Nadu, the success of Dravidian parties in the 1960s and 1970s was attended by a growth in folklore studies. Folklore organisations, conferences and degree courses would eventually dot the country, but folklore would never occupy centrestage in scholarship or in public life. As we have seen, colonialism, or some form of external cultural domination, was a common feature of folklore-nationalisms across Europe, but whereas folklore was given a literary legitimacy by those European movements, it failed to achieve that status in India. By 1800 Latin was long dead and only vernacular literatures in Europe could be constructed into vehicles for nationalism, but India had a

different literary history. When Indian nationalists turned to archaisation in the second half of the century, other, less suspicious candidates were at hand; a resuscitated classical Sanskrit literature shored up the Hinduisation of reconstructed pre-colonial traditions in north India, while the rediscovered, ancient Tamil texts provided the basis for an unambiguous antiquity in Madras. The various historical narratives which underpinned Tamil nationalism—whether of a pure Tamil later defiled by Sanskritic corruptions or of a harmonious intermixing of Tamil and Sanskrit cultures—had one element in common: an ancient south Indian civilisation whose glory still glowed in classical literature. And folklore, whether oral tale or spirit possession, had no place in this re-formulation of the historic past. At the end of the nineteenth century, the ambivalence shown toward folklore rendered it unable to lead, let alone contribute in any sustained manner to, a national movement. However much it might be invoked as indigenous culture, it was too native to inspire a modern nation, too familiar for public life.

6

Conclusions and Extensions

In describing the historical relationship between print and folklore in Tamil, chiefly in Madras in the nineteenth century, this book has drawn attention to a number of paradoxes and ambivalences. At the outset, I noted the apparent incompatibility of print with oral tradition, the assumption that print media supplants oral tradition. This discredited but still persistent notion about the conflict between the new technology and orality, however, was disproved by our finding that printed folklore was plentiful and influential in Madras in the nineteenth century. But printed folklore contains another more historically located paradox in that it reflects the central conflict of nineteenth-century India: the perceived opposition between tradition and modernity, between folklore as a repository of native tradition and print as a technology of colonial modernity. However, that incongruity was also resolved by demonstrating that tradition is inseparable from modernity and by documenting that folklore was invoked in nationalist discourse. Finally, this study found that, although folklore is neither incompatible with print nor inseparable from modernity, it proved incapable of sustaining a nationalist movement in Madras, or in India at large.

In discussing the reasons for this conclusion to the history of printed folklore, I have emphasised an ambivalence in attitudes toward folklore itself—at once a potent symbol of identity and an embarrassing badge of backwardness. Folklore everywhere is regarded with ambiguity, but in the context of colonial south India that ambivalence was compounded by the perception that it represented both an antidote to colonialism

and the antithesis of modernity. Thus, in the controversial negotiations between tradition and modernity that dominated the nineteenth century, folklore became too closely associated with objectionable features of pre-colonial traditions. From the 1830s, as we have seen, anglicisation provoked traditionalisation, and missionary activity prompted a Hindu revival begun by pundit-publishers; but the drive toward literary and cultural modernity was unstoppable, especially because it was articulated in English, the language of power in the second half of the century. Moral prose, not decadent poetry, in English, not in Tamil, was declared the idiom of modernity; even the past was to be constructed using European historical models, not fictitious legends. In this massive re-evaluation of tradition, when even traditionalists were forced to reconsider what others called superstition and primitive, folklore was tarred with the broad brush of backwardness.

Folklore had its champions, too. The most vocal was Natesa Sastri, whose books were widely admired, but more as information about the past than as inspiration for the future. Other groups of Tamils, some outside elite circles in Madras, continued to draw upon folklore, mainly in the form of legends, for writing new histories of castes, poets and temples.

Already undermined by these doubts about its civilisational status, the final blow to folklore's public role was the rediscovery of an older stratum of classical Tamil literature. Coinciding with the emergence of a shift in literary historical writings and nationalism in the metropolitan centres from the 1870s, these newly edited and published classical texts surpassed oral texts in three important criteria for a literary nationalism: antiquity, purity and civilisation.

Underneath these overarching conclusions, this book has also presented ideas and information that should contribute to our understanding of print, folklore and colonialism in nineteenth-century Madras. The connecting thread of the book has been the history of printing in Tamil, but instead of isolating print as an object of analysis this book has studied it as one among several innovations that collectively changed Tamil literary culture. Approaching print as allied to a set of emerging literary practices, rather than as static technology polarised

against oral tradition, it was possible to present a historical narrative of printing that emphasised its uses.

Print, as shown throughout the book, enabled old (and new) texts to be put to new uses, and to reach different and wider (but still quite limited) audiences.[1] The nature and effects of these uses, however, are due as much to changing cultural contexts as to inert technology. An important argument of this book, presented in the early chapters, is that print developed alongside a set of literary practices—interlingual dictionaries and grammars, translation, discursive prose and script reform—which were set in motion as a result of colonial contact in the sixteenth century. Before that contact with Europeans and European languages, none of these practices—not just print but the others, including translation—was common in Tamil. The first phase of Tamil printing, by Jesuits on the west coast in the 1570s, produced only a few books but initiated the changes that would lead to a modern Tamil literature; in addition, print and the other literary practices stimulated new thinking about language and literature. To see Tamil on the printed page, to read other languages translated into Tamil, to read and write Tamil in argumentative prose, to see its letters in new shapes—all this, I believe, suggested to Tamils that language was more than a passive paternity; it demonstrated that language is capable of reflecting and of stimulating social and intellectual change. The 'novelty' of these first books printed in India was said to have gained the 'goodwill of the natives', but printed books would have consequences far beyond any missionary successes in conversion.

None of this, however, became apparent until much later in the eighteenth century, when print and its associated literary practices took firm root in Tamil. When Lutherans set up the first printing press in the Tamil country, in Tranquebar in 1711, this 'rare invention' intensified the theological rivalry between them and the neighbouring Jesuits, principally C.G. Beschi, who lamented that they had no printing press. The Lutherans printed translations in Tamil, to which Beschi responded by writing counterblasts in a new, argumentative prose, and in a new orthography; he also wrote a long folktale, which later became the first example of printed folklore in Tamil. These writings and translations,

aided by the script reform and disseminated by print, were the forerunners of Tamil prose journalism and literary fiction in the nineteenth century. Beschi and the Lutherans also produced detailed and authoritative interlingual dictionaries and grammars, which continued to shape local perceptions of language and literature throughout the century.

Before 1800, the number of Tamils who read or heard or even saw these books would have been small—native converts, pundits who worked with missionaries and others who otherwise had contact with them; the role of these pundits and Indian Christians in producing a new Tamil was also limited, but their counterparts in the nineteenth century played a major role in Tamil literary history. Their achievements, and the other developments of the long hundred years after 1800, were described in the final three chapters of this book: early Tamil books printed and written by Tamils for Tamils; the appearance of printed folktales; the public role of pundit-publishers; the campaign for a New Vernacular, and two formulations of folklore and the nation. From this history of print and folklore in Tamil, three primary uses of print stand out.

The first is pedagogical. Just as the first printed books in the sixteenth century were used to teach a new religion, by the early nineteenth century they were used to educate others. Soon after it was established in 1812, the College of Fort St George began to print many of the interlingual dictionaries and grammars prepared in the previous century, plus new language-learning tools, such as prose primers and prose versions of traditional texts. Among these were the first printed books of folklore, which were used by junior civil servants at the College and occupied a central place in the public school system that was set up in Madras in the 1820s. These early collections of folktales (*Pancatantra*, *Katamancari* and *Katacintamani*) were soon joined by many others (notably Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton') printed at the College or other presses in Madras; meanwhile, texts on history, natural history, maths, astronomy and geography also appeared. By the 1840s schoolbook publishing became lucrative and still accounts for the largest number of printed Tamil books.

As with the missionaries, public education meant reform, and so when the High School of Madras University opened in 1841, printed

folklore was pressed into service as a model of what was called the 'New Vernacular': a plain-speaking, moral prose that would liberate Tamil from its supposed enslavement to the Oriental excesses of poetry, initially by disseminating European knowledge through translations, which were later expected to stimulate original prose compositions in Tamil. Before long, however, Tamil folktales had failed the reformers' test for a New Vernacular: they were too traditional in both form and content, as well as immoral and unoriginal. By mid-century, these once-promising folktales had been dismissed from the High School and the University. Only the *Pancatantra,* in an expurgated version, remained in the High School curriculum, although it and the other books were popular in local schools throughout the Presidency. Folklore never went out of print, however, and it assumed a new role toward the end of the century.

Before that, staring with the 1830s, a second use of print became prominent. Even in the late eighteenth century, with the first newspapers in Madras, print had been used to inform the public, but only in the first half of the new century did journalism, fed by increasing literacy and Indian involvement in public politics, have widespread effects. Whereas early newspapers published government announcements, adverts for selling Madeira wine and notices of the arrivals of ships and the departures of Army regiments, by the 1830s they became a forum for public debate. Newspapers had always been privately owned in Madras, but when the Government of Fort St George began to publish its own official *Gazette,* private newspapers, including an Indian-owned, bilingual paper, began to print letters, petitions and news items about issues of concern to the Tamil public, especially the steady increase in missionary activity in Madras.

Again, although Indians had owned presses and published books before the 1830s, in that decade they became more publicly and polit-ically oriented. Three of these early presses were owned by pundits who had either been at the College or were part of a wider network of pundits in Madras. Beginning with the Kalvi Vilakkam Press in 1834, these pundit-presses published not only school texts, grammars, dictionaries and editions of traditional texts but also books giving advice on social behaviour and recommending religious conduct. More important,

and one of the major findings of this book, these presses were not just publishing houses: during the watershed decade of the 1840s, they and their allied organisations became directly involved in public politics. In particular, the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society and its parent body, the Kalvi Kalanciyam Press, lent their influence to the anti-missionary campaign. By mid-century the use of print to inform the public had assumed a new political thrust, and fear of cultural loss through anglicisation and Christianity had turned Indian publishers into political organisations.

This episode in the history of Tamil printing, the rise and role of the pundit-publishers, highlights the 1840s as the crucial divide in the history of nineteenth-century Madras. With its involvement in legal disputes and its ability to organise large public meetings, these pundit-publishers and their allied associations were the forerunners of Hindu public organisations that dominated politics after mid-century and eventually evolved into the Dravidian movement in the last decades of the century. The socio-religious orientation of the Catur Veda Siddhanta Society stands in a direct line of descent to the activities of Jaffna-born Tamil scholars Arumukam Navalar and Damodaram Pillai, and then Nallaswami Pillai, who founded the Saiva Siddhanta Society in 1886. These men (among others) are credited with having led the cultural revival of Tamil language and literature in the nineteenth century, and deservedly so, but the foundations of that movement were laid down half a century earlier by the pundit-publishers.

Although I have emphasised that traditional texts, many of them edited by these exponents of Tamil revivalism, were invoked in nationalist discourse in the last third of the century, we have also seen that even in the first third, print brought them into public focus. This third use of print, to enlist traditional texts in the public debate, is an extension of the second, which illustrates the point that the functions of print are due as much to historical conditions as to the technology itself. It also demonstrates the maxim, mentioned on the first page of this book, that the initial effect of print was not so much to create new texts as to create more old texts.

Throughout the century, beginning with the publication of the

Tirukkural in 1812, through to the publication of Sastri's folktales in the 1880s, print gave traditional texts a second life, a parallel existence on the page. This, however, is not the same as the preservative power of print, that supposed ability to fix language, create literary standards and even engender vernacular literatures, which Eisenstein singled out as 'possibly the most important' use of print.[2] In south India, I would not say that print preserved traditional texts. By 1850, a large number of old Tamil texts—medieval grammars and religious poetry, Kamban's *Ramayana*, poems on temples—had been published; and in the 1880s, print retrieved the even older Sangam classics from manuscript obscurity. But print did not save either the medieval or the Sangam classics from oblivion. And print did not preserve folktales, which were neither dying nor obscure. What print did was to enable all these traditional texts to play new roles.

Printed and ready to hand for many decades, both classical and folk texts were brought into public debate only in the nationalist discourse of the 1870s. Chapter 5 described two formulations of folklore and the nation. In the first, missionaries and British civil servants defined a folk identity for non-Brahmins centred on the image of a 'buried' Dravidian culture; even the manifestly non-folk *Tirukkural* was enlisted as a folk-song, a move facilitated by its appearance in print. The second formulation, articulated by Natesa Sastri and echoed in public reviews of his books, underplayed the theme of a subjugated Dravidian culture and instead emphasised a broader cultural loss through the image of the vanishing village. Transferred to the printed page and translated into Sastri's English, folklore could be seen as a national literature. At the same time, classical Tamil texts, from the *Tirukkural* to ancient Sangam poetry, were also presented in print and, to a lesser extent, in English translation. This body of classical Tamil literature, now in authoritative editions, was put to a new purpose in the changing political context; by the turn of the century, it had become the literary vehicle for Tamil nationalism. Though dismissed from the academy and in retreat from public politics, printed folklore remained a potent, if ambivalent, cultural symbol. The 1826 *Pancatantra*, for example, made its author a celebrity, and a scholar worthy of emulation by the most celebrated pundits of the century.

Extensions

The influence of printed folklore, including Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's *Pancatantra*, reached far beyond Madras, beyond India and beyond the colonial period. As mentioned in the last chapter, European ideas about folklore and nationalism indirectly influenced similar notions in India, but that is only one phase of an older and continuous circulation that moved back and forth between India and Europe. This intellectual history dates back to Greek sources on India, and to the transmission of Indian tales and Aesop's tales across the Bosporus and back, but I will only summarise this Indo-European circulation of folklore and ideas about folklore and the nation, and only from the eighteenth century. This exchange can be imagined in three moves. In the first move, images of India influenced European ideas of folklore and nationalism; we know, for example, that Herder's construction of folklore and its place in national history was in part informed by romanticised images of India conveyed by eighteenth-century translations from classical Sanskrit and Arabic texts, and by their reception by European writers, such as Voltaire, Goethe and Novalis.[3] But popular tales also influenced European ideas about India. Although tales from the *Pancatantra* had been known in Europe, usually as the *Fables of Bidpai/Pilpay*, long before the eighteenth century, only in the first years of that century did Oriental tales enter European literature as obvious translations of whole texts: *The Arabian Nights* began to appear in Galland's French translation in Paris between 1704 and 1708, while English translations of the *Nights* and translations of other Oriental tales soon followed.[4]

In the second move, Herder's ideas, and those inspired by him among early nineteenth-century Europe intellectuals, were transmitted by Orientalists, and by books and journals, to India, where they combined with indigenous ideas in formulations of folklore and the nation. Those formulations in south India, primarily by Gover and Sastri, have already been described but not what happened afterward, which is the third phase of this circular flow of ideas: by the end of the century, Indian folktales, in printed translations encoded with European notions about folklore, travelled back to Europe, where they in turn had an impact on European thinking about national identities and cultural histories.

These intellectual currents were propelled chiefly by two propositions—the Aryan thesis and the diffusion theory—developed by European folklorists, mythographers and anthropologists in the second half of the nineteenth century. Stimulated by William Jones' philology, widened by the Grimms' research into comparative mythology and folktales, and detailed by German Sanskritists, the Aryan thesis of a common Indo-European antiquity was accepted by many leading scholars in England. Among the key pieces of evidence for this common history was the similarity of folktales found in India and Europe. The Grimms favoured water-imagery to explain this shared ancestry, which they likened to 'the stream of a wandering tribe pouring itself into one uninhabited tract of land after another ... How else can we explain the fact of a story in a lonely mountain village in Hesse resembling one in India, Greece, or Serbia?'[5] Indian folklore was central also to Max Müller's 1856 essay on 'Comparative mythology' and to Walter K. Kelly's 1863 *Curiosities of Indo-European Tradition and Folklore,* which together articulated the Aryan thesis for an English-reading public.

To this Aryan historical thesis of a shared linguistic and racial history, the diffusion theory added the mechanics of literary borrowing: similar tales among different peoples were the result of oral and written transmission. Here again, and even more prominently, India and Indian folktales occupied centrestage. Theodore Benfey's 1859 study of how the *Pancatantra* travelled from Asia to Europe was the most authoritative statement and convincing proof of diffusionism. Benfey put the case succinctly: 'Folktales ... were originally from India', he wrote and then added that India had thus recompensed Europe, for its borrowing of the animal fable from Aesop, by spreading folktales, especially the wondertale, 'almost over the entire world'.[6] When we add to Benfey and Müller the comparative research of other folklorists, like William Clouston and Emmanuel Cosquin, it is no exaggeration to say that Indian folktales supplied the lifeblood of diffusionist thinking in Europe, and particularly in Britain.

Some anthropologists attacked the monogenesis implied by this comparative research, setting off a debate that culminated in the histrionic arguments about solar mythology in the second half of the

century, but there can be no doubt that the Aryan thesis and diffusion theory brought India closer to Europe. Once the history and traditions of India had been linked to those of England, scholars there drew upon the customs and folklore of Indian 'tribes' to reimagine their own nation. Although Indian folktales had been employed by the Grimms to establish their vision of an Indo-European ancestry, proponents of the Aryan thesis in England preferred to utilise ancient Indian customs and beliefs. In James Frazer's classic text, *The Golden Bough*, for example, its central motif of 'the dying king' is based on a traveller's description of rites in Malabar on the southwest coast of India.[7] Less well known, but actually more influential in the Folklore Society in London, was George Laurence Gomme, who reconstructed ancient English village institutions through a study of those in India. He also carefully differentiated Aryan from non-Aryan customs, illustrating that the Dravidian thesis had travelled beyond Madras.[8]

In this circle of intellectual reciprocity between Europe and India, Tamil printed folklore played its modest part. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Natesa Sastri was recognised among folklorists at the Society in England, notably Richard Carnac Temple; but another influence on his thinking was one of the most passionate diffusionists of the period. Alexander William Clouston, a Scot from the Orkney Islands, did a lifelong study tracing the hidden histories of folklore that moved from the Orient to Europe; in one recondite essay he 'proved' that the proverb 'Don't count your chickens until they hatch' is derived from the Vedas.[9] Temple encouraged Sastri to translate and publish his folktales, but it was Clouston who actually collaborated with him on a book, writing the detailed comparative notes that accompany Sastri's *The King and his Four Ministers* (1889). But the collaboration worked both ways, as Clouston used one of Sastri's folktales for the missing link in a chain of transmission of a humorous tale that had its final destination in far-away Norway. The Orkneyman also wrote a glowing review of Sastri's *Folklore of Southern India*, which he called 'a most useful as well as highly entertaining collection ... eminently serviceable to the student of the science of comparative folklore'.[10] Clouston understated the case. By the end of the nineteenth century, Sastri's tales

and other books of Indian folktales had pride of place in the field of comparative folklore; *Old Deccan Days* in 1868 had been followed by no less than eleven more book-length collections of Indian tales, all published in London;[11] still more collections, published in India, also reached England, while Indian folktales regularly appeared in the *Indian Antiquary* and in *Folk-Lore*, the journal of the Folklore Society in London.

Printed folklore did not supplant oral storytelling in India in the nineteenth century, or even in the twentieth; if some traditions have declined, and they have, it is not because print replaced orality but because their face-to-face performance contexts have been displaced by urban living and their functions assumed by new media, such as film and television. Nevertheless, oral tales are still very much a living tradition, in Tamil at least. In 1996, I spent three months collecting folktales in Tamil Nadu; in that short period, and without inordinate difficulty I recorded well over three hundred tales. Many of them are found in the *Pancatantra*, or in Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's *Katamancari* and *Katacintamani*, or in Natesa Sastri's later collections. I also recorded oral versions of the long, complex stories found in the two Tamil collections of framed tales (*Matanakamarajan Katai* and *Vikkiramattitan Katai*); indeed, the tale-tellers often cited chapbook editions of these collections as a source for their oral tales. Their oral versions differed from the printed ones in details and occasionally in episodes but not in the core narrative.

If oral tale-telling is alive in south India today, it is also true that print has expanded that tradition. When Indian folktales first appeared in print in the early decades of the nineteenth century, they initiated another chapter in the long history of Indian folklore. Stories from the *Pancatantra* were probably written down by AD 200 and were translated into Middle Persian by AD 700; by that time, too, some of its tales had been depicted in south Indian temple sculptural reliefs. Tales from the *Pancatantra* also travelled west in oral and written versions beyond India, through Persian, Arabic and Syriac, into Greek, Hebrew and Latin by the medieval period, and finally into modern European languages by

the time of the Renaissance.[12] But as a collection, as a bound text, these most famous of Indian folktales only entered print in the early nineteenth century, first in a Marathi version at Serampore, near Calcutta, and then in Tamil at Madras; the Marathi text in Bengal was an experiment, but the Tamil translation prepared by a pundit at the College of Fort St George found a prominent place in the classroom.[13] The unwieldy, large-format book produced by the College Press in 1826 was soon reprinted in smaller, handy editions, which were then pirated and sometimes censored and always popular. Taught to foreigners, read in schoolrooms, kept in dusty cupboards, studied by scholars and condemned by missionaries, it became a classic. Later, when the text was translated and printed in English, and other European languages, it joined that ever-moving international circulation of tales. But these printed texts did not preserve the *Pancatantra* tales, which are still orally told; they only put them to new uses.

In Tamil, too, print did not so much reclaim folklore as reinvent it for new eras and new users. Precisely because it is fixed on the page, printed folklore is capable of transforming the nostalgia for tradition: to encounter the vanishing village is to experience something essentially modern. As Ian Duncan, writing about Walter Scott's novelistic recreations of bardic Scotland, described it, our separation from the past is accompanied by 'our privileged repossession of those lost identities as aesthetic effects'.[14] By their very presence in print, folktales recollect both personal and national loss. This was Natesa Sastri's experience, but it is not only a colonial experience; according to some, A.K. Ramanujan's recent book of Indian folktales has become a new Grimms for India.[15]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, folklore assumes diverse print forms in south India—cheap chapbooks, popular anthologies, academic monographs, reprints of nineteenth-century books, schoolbooks and comic books, in English and in Tamil. These books are not a living oral tradition, but neither are they lifeless documents; instead, for their mostly urban, elite readers, they generate the pleasure of remembrance and a spark of recognition, if only on the page. Tamil folktales have not been readmitted to the university syllabus and they are usually tastefully edited for modern readers; but they are also

studied by scholars and appreciated by many. Quaintly called 'country-tales' (*nattappura kataikal*), they remain both redolent of the vanishing village and a source for contemporary identity. Amid the new high-tech world of south India, folklore is viewed with an ambivalence that is the legacy of nineteenth-century Madras.

APPENDIX

Tamil Printed Books, Madras, 1800–1830

This appendix lists books printed in Tamil (or Tamil–English or Tamil–Latin, plus important Tamil grammars) in Madras during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century; I have also included a few of the earliest books printed elsewhere in south India (and two in London), and these locations are given in brackets. The list does not include the numerous pamphlets or tracts printed during this period. We should also keep in mind that during the period from 1800 to 1830 many Tamil books were printed in Ceylon, several at Tranquebar and a few at Serampore, near Calcutta.

Original authors of translated texts, and some indication of the book's contents, are put in brackets. Several title pages list no publisher [np]; a few books that I have not actually seen are indicated as 'unconfirmed' [uc] and the source given. The books in this Appendix are found either in the Oriental and India Office Collection at the British Library in London, the Roja Muttiah Research Library in Madras or the Special Collections Reading Room in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. This list is not exhaustive, and more Tamil books printed in Madras during this period will undoubtedly be found in other locations.

1804   *Kantarantati* [Arunakirinatar; Saiva devotional poem], Kulantai Velu Pillai and Ekampara Upattiyayar [Colombo].

1804   *Muppattirantu patumai katai* [oral-literary tale; uc; Paravamci-vanantam 1966: 95].

1806   *Kotum Tamil* [Beschi's grammar], trans. Christopher Henry Horst,
         Vepery.

1806   *Cattiya vetam, putu erpatu* [Old Testament] [Johann Fabricius],
         Vepery, 2nd ed.

1807   *A vocabulary of English and Tamil words*, I. Nicholas, Vepery.

1808   *Catamuka Ravanan katai* [oral-literary tale; uc: Paravamcivanantam,
         1966: 95].

1809   *Karaikkal Ammaiyar tivya carittira kirttanai* [Saiva devotional
         poem], Kanniyappa Mutaliyar, Attiniyam ant Teli Niyus Piras.

1811   *Tamil vilakkam* [primer], Soobroya Moodeliar [Cupparaya
         Mutaliyar] [np].

1812   *Manita tolil vilakkam* [essays], Soobroya Moodeliar [Cupparaya
         Mutaliyar] [np].

1812   *Tirukkural mula patam* [Tirukkural], Maca Tinacaritai.

1812   *Ampai talappuranam* [temple legend], Arikarama Aiyar, Laksmi
         Vilaca Press [Ampacamuttiram].

1812   *Mariyatai Raman katai* [oral tale; uc: Paravamcivanantam 1966: 94].

1813   *Kotum Tamil* [Beschi's grammar in Latin; reissue of 1738 Tranquebar
         publication], College Press.

1813   *Ilakkana curukkam* [primer], Cittampala Tecikar [Cidambara
         Vattiyar], College Press.

1814   *Sastri kummi* [Christian devotional song], Vedanayakam Sastri
         [uc; Hudson 2000: 117].

1815   *Ramayanam uttarakantam* [trans. from Sanskrit], Cittampala
         Tecikar [Cidambara Vattiyar], College Press.

1816 [?] *Tirukkural*, trans. F.W. Ellis, College Press.

1816   *Potuvana cepa postakam* [Book of Common Prayer], J.P. Rottler
         Government Press, Vepery

1817   *Attuma Uttiyanam* [collection of Catholic prayers, etc.], Muttusami
         Pillai, Commercial Press.

1817   *Tamil vilakkam*, 2nd ed. Soobroya Moodeliar [Cupparaya
         Mutaliyar], Maca Tinacaritai.

1818   *Palacarakku elappattu* [folk songs], Sri Natesa Vilacam Press.
         [Tiruvanantapuram/Trivandaram].

1819   *Potuvana cepa postakam*, J.P. Rottler, Vepery.

1819   *Pururava* [purava?] *cakravartti katai* [oral-literary narrative],
         Periaswamy Pillai, Iyal Tamil Vilakka Press [Kancipuram] [uc: Diehl
         1981: xxxii].

1819	*Cattiya vetam* [Old Testament] [Fabricius], Vepery, 3rd ed.
1820	*Hymnarium Tamilicum* [Hymnal] [Fabricius], Vepery, 3rd ed.
1820	*Ilakkana vinavitai* [primer] Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, College Press.
1820	*Veta vikarpa tikkaram* [Refutation of *Veta vikarpa*, an anti-Christian tract], Muttusami Pillai [np].
1820	*Potuvana cepa postakam*, with Psalter, J.P. Rottler, Vepery.
1821	*Rudiments of Tamul grammar*, Rev. Robert Anderson [London].
1822	*The adventures of the Gooroo Paramartan* [Beschi], trans. Benjamin G. Babington [London].
1822	*Potuvana cepa postakam*. J.P. Rottler, Vepery.
1822	*Visuvacattukum uraiyattikum ututta piratana veta vakkiyankal* [Biblical passages], Vepery.
1822	*Cattiya vetam putu erpatu* [New Testament] [Fabricius], Vepery, 3rd ed.
1822	*A grammar of the high dialect of the Tamil language* [Beschi's Latin–Tamil grammar], trans. Benjamin G. Babington, College Press.
1822	*Tamil selections* [Old Testament], 3rd ed. Vepery.
1823	*Vikkiraka pattikkum tevya pattikkum campasanai* ['Conversation between a Hindu and a Christian' [Rev. Schwartz], ed. W. Roberts [np].
1824	*Catur-akarati* [Beschi's dictionary], eds Tantavaraya Mutaliyar and Ramacandra Kavirayar, College Press.
1824	*Cattiya vetam putu erpatu* [New Testament] [Fabricius], Vepery.
1825	*Hymnarium Tamilicum* [Hymnal] [Fabricius], Vepery, 4th ed.
1825	*The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, Vol. 1. trans. P. Gnanapragasa Moodelliar, Commercial Press.
1825	*Pompavaiyar vilacam*, Commercial Press [uc: Diehl 1981: xxxiv].
1825	*Tamil aricuvati* [primer, 6 books], Capt. Henry Harkness and Visvambra Sastri, College Press.
1825	*Nana pocana vilakkam* ['Explanation of The Lord's Supper'], C.T.E. Rhenius, Vepery.
1825	*Kiristuvin nana patalkal* [Christain devotional songs] [Fabricius], Vepery, 4th ed.
1826	*Katamancari* [folktales] Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, College Press.
1826	*Pancatantira katai* [folktales], Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, College Press.
1826	*Taruma nul [miruti cantirikai]* [trans. of Sanskrit text], Kantacami Pulavar, College Press.

1826	*Oru parateci, jon paniyan carittiram* [Pilgrim's Progress], Vepery, 2nd ed.

1827   *Kalvi eni* [trans. of Mrs Trimmer's tales], Camiyappa Mutaliyar and Kantacami Pulavar, College Press.

1827–
1833   *Cattiya vetam* [Old and New Testaments], revised by C.T.E. Rhenius, Vepery.

1827   *Vikkiraka pattikkum tevya pattikkum campasanai* ['Conversation between a Hindu and a Christian'] [Rev. Schwartz], ed. W. Roberts, Vepery, 2nd ed.

1828   *Ilakkana vinavitai* [primer], Tantavaraya Mutaliyar, College Press, 2nd ed.

1828   *Ilakkana curukku vinavitai* [primer], Vicakaperumal Aiyar, Vepery.

1828   *Atikkala carittira cankirakam. A sketch of ancient (Mediterranean) history,* Putuvai Nanappirakaca Mutaliyar, American Mission Press.

1828   *Pukola castira cankirakam* [geology textbook], [np].

1828   *Potuvana cepa postakam,* J.P. Rottler, Vepery.

1829   *Appostalar utaiya nataikkaikal* [Acts of Apostles], Vepery.

1829   *Tirumantirankal* [Catholic prayer book], [np].

1829   *Tarukavana vilacam* [drama], Ramacantira Kavirayar, Sanmukam Vilaca Press.

1830   *Nitinerivilakkam* [ethical poetry] [Kumarakuruparar], trans. H. Stokes, Vepery.

1830   *Ulaku carittira malai* [Rev. Schmidt's 'A history of the world'], Vepery.

1830   *Castira camvatankal* [trans. of Joyce's 'Scientific dialogues'], Camiyappa Mutaliyar. Vepery.

1830   *Nilan allatu Parakalar* [a life of a poet-saint for children], A.N. Kannaiya [np].

1830   *First lessons in Tamil and English,* Church Mission Press [Nellore].

1830   *Turakkar pitita kala mutal colluppatum Intustani carittira cankirakam* ['A history of India, from the time of the Muslim invasion'], Putuvai Nanappirakaca Mutaliyar, Vepery, Madras School Book Society.

1830   *Tiruvalluvamalai* [verses on Tiruvalluvar], ed. Vicakaperumal Aiyar, Vepery.

1830   *Tirukkural,* ed. Vicakaperumal Aiyar, Vepery.

1830   *Tiruvarankattucarrirunamam* [Pillaiperumal Aiyankar; devotional poem] ed. Tiruvenkatacala Mutaliyar, Ravana Press [six similar poems, composed by this author and edited by this editor, were published in the same year from this press].

Abbreviations Used

AT	Aarne-Thompson international tale-type
OIOC	Oriental and India Office Collection, the British Library
MPP	Madras Public Proceedings

Notes

Chapter 1
Introduction

1. See, however, Dundes and Pagter 1975.
2. Douglas 1966.
3. Stock 1990: 5.
4. Bendix 1997.
5. Abrahams 1993.
6. Stock 1990.
7. Martin 1994: 153.
8. A similar argument for early modern England is made in Fox 2000.
9. On 'colonial modernity', see Menon forthcoming; Washbrook 1997.
10. Chandra 1994: 12.
11. On early Telugu printing, see Mangamma 1975; Schmitthenner 2001.
12. For example, Baker 1984; Arnold 1986; Suntharalingam 1974. An exception is Irschick 1994.
13. Washbrook 1999.
14. Eisenstein 1979, Vol. 1: 33
15. Davis 1991; Chartier 1989; Chartier ed. 1989.
16. On the complex relations between orality and writing in the medieval period, see Stock 1983; Street 1984.
17. Godzich 1995: 77–8.
18. Fox 2000.
19. Vincent 1989; Graff 1987.
20. Finnegan 1977.
21. Johns 1998.
22. Smith 1998; Chatterjee 1993.
23. Trumpener 1997: 21–3.

24. This important point is made by Hudson 2000.
25. Eisenstein 1983: 35–8; for Tamil, see James 2000: 75.
26. Shaw 1981b; Shaw 1987; Diehl 1964; Kesavan 1985.
27. Pritchett 1985; Das 1991: 32–9; King 1994; Hansen forthcoming; Joshi 2002; Stark forthcoming. A good sociological study of publishing in Tamil is Venkatachalapathy 1994b.
28. See, for example, Banerjee 1989; Bayly 1996; Chatterjee 1993; Roy 1995.
29. Naregal 2001; Bhattacharya 2000.
30. Cohn 1985.
31. The European case is stated in Febvre and Martin 1976 [1958]: 332.
32. Robinson 1993; Ghosh 1998.
33. Velay-Vallantin 1989.
34. Zipes 1983.
35. Robinson 1993: 249; Clark 1970: 15.
36. Zvelebil 1990: 157–8.
37. The valuable essays by Venkatachalapathy (1999), Narayana Rao and Subrahmanyam (1999), and Servan-Schreiber (1999) focus on printed folklore in the twentieth century.
38. Raheja 1996; Maskiell 1999; Naithani 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Dalmia 2001.
39. Dorson ed. 1968: 332.
40. On the concept of 'folklore' in India, see Coomaraswamy 1936; Pande 1963.
41. See Naithani 2001b for a discussion of Indian countervoices in nineteenth-century folklore, and Sen Gupta 1965 on Bengali folklorists.
42. Dalmia 1997; Washbrook 1999.
43. Bayly 1998: 1–63.
44. Chatterjee 1993: 72–5.
45. Varadarajan 1970/1971.
46. *Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, 1892: 283.
47. Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 1992; Peterson 1995; Peterson forthcoming.
48. Shaw 1978.
49. Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 1992: 142–3.
50. On Tamil folktales, present and past, see Blackburn 2001b.
51. Zvelebil 1992: 91–128; Zvelebil 1964.
52. Hart 1975: 152–8; Zvelebil 1992: 132–6; Kailasapathy 1968.
53. Hart 1975: 157–8.

54. Zvelebil 1992: 93.
55. Zvelebil 1992: 125.
56. Losty 1982: 10. See also Hoernle 1901; Kesavan 1986.
57. Copper plates are mentioned by Losty 1982: 10; the printed book, a copy of Beschi's *Catur-akarati*, is mentioned in Zvelebil 1994, Vol. 2: 468.
58. Losty 1982: 6.
59. Losty 1982: 6.
60. For Madras city in 1891, literacy in Tamil is reported to have been 49% for males and 8% for females; for the Madras Presidency as a whole the figures were 9% and less than 1%; literacy in English in the Presidency was less than .05% (Stuart 1893: 174). Caste variation was enormous: for example, in 1901, the figure for male literacy in Tamil across the Presidency was 74% among Tamil Brahmins and 15% for Nadars; the corresponding figures for literacy in English in the Presidency among the same castes were 18% and .05% (Irschick 1969: 16–17). See also Baliga 1960.

Chapter 2
Early Books and New Literary Practices: 1556–1800

1. The history of prose, in particular, owes much to pre-colonial traditions and conventions, but the discursive prose that missionaries wrote became the preferred model for Tamil in the nineteenth century. On pre-modern historical writings in south India, some of which were in prose, see Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2001.
2. Foucault 1970: 296.
3. Annamalai 2000: 74.
4. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1982 [1936]: xxxiv-v.
5. Henriques refers in letters to his grammar, which he began in 1548 and completed four year later (Vermeer 1982: xiii). Vermeer (1982: xiv), following Thani Nayakam (1954), who discovered the manuscript in Lisbon, believes it is Henriques's grammar or a copy of it; the manuscript is bilingual but primarily in Portuguese. The first printed grammar of any Indian language is the 1640 Konkani *Arte da lingoa Canarim*.
6. Annamalai 2000: 74–5.
7. Annamalai 1979: 53, fn. 2.

8. Monius 2001, especially pp. 117–33. Rules for assimilating foreign words into Tamil were revised in a later medieval grammar, *Nannul*.

9. Annamalai 1979: 38–41.

10. David Shulman, personal communication, October 2000.

11. Peterson 1995: 9.

12. Bayly 1989: 258.

13. One book in romanised Konkani was also printed at Goa in the sixteenth century.

14. Bayly 1989: 325. These conversions, however, were in name only (Stephen 1998: 62–5).

15. Shaw 1981a: 26.

16. Thani Nayakam 1958. Stephen 1998: 327. On early Tamil books, see Shaw 1981a, 1982, 1987, 1993.

17. Commercial printing came later, but even these early books were sold: a 1568 imprint in Goa, for instance, announced that it was for sale 'at the house of Fernao de Castilho, bookseller, at the front of the butchershop. The price is one and a half tangas, paper money' (Diehl Papers, 1.E. pp. 59–60; the tanga was an old Muslim coin, equal to about one-eighth of a gold cruzado).

18. The details on Henriques' life and work are found in Shaw 1982; Shaw 1993; Thani Nayakam 1958.

19. Diehl Papers, 2.B. p. 23; Thani Nayakam 1958. Stephen (1998: 326), citing Xavier's letters, notes that he was aware that his translation was incorrect and desired Henriques to complete it.

20. The first printed book in Telugu appeared in 1746 in Halle, Germany; Bengali in 1778 in Hugli; Malayalam in 1799 in Bombay; English in 1716 in Tranquebar. Printed books in Marathi, Persian and Urdu came early in the nineteenth century.

21. James 2000: 101.

22. Shaw 1981a.

23. Diehl mentions that this 1578 book was printed on paper made in China (Diehl Papers. 1. G. p. 67).

24. Shaw (1987: 9–10) notes a few Indian-run presses in late eighteenth-century Bombay. Bayly reviews existing arguments for the failure of north Indian rulers to take up the new technology but reaches no conclusion, which is not surprising since none of the arguments is convincing (Bayly 1996: 238–9).

25. Until about 1850, printing presses in India were, with few exceptions, made of wooden frames, susceptible to termites (Graham Shaw, personal communication, December 2001). Iron presses became common in Madras only in the 1870s (*Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, 1885, Vol. 3: 550).

26. From *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo*, Vol. 1, p. 18, as quoted in Ferroli 1939: 469.

27. Thani Nayakam 1958: 290 (my translation). See also Stephen 1998: 324.

28. Bhabha 1994.

29. Letter by St Xavier, as quoted in Bayly 1989: 328.

30. Cited in Stephen 1998: 335.

31. On the commentary tradition in Tamil, see Zvelebil 1974: 231ff.; Cutler 1992; Monius 2001: 132–55.

32. Filliozat 1967. Stephen 1998: 332–6.

33. My translation from the Tamil text as reproduced in Tamil Natan 1995: 48.

34. These details are taken from Shaw 1987: 7.

35. Shaw 1987: 6.

36. On Nobili's life and writings, see Rajamanickam 1972; Zupanov 1999.

37. Zupanov 1999: 78–80.

38. Zupanov 1999: 84–9.

39. Rajamanickam 1972: 98ff.

40. Zupanov 1999: 246.

41. Antem de Proenca, *Vocabulario Tamuelco com a significacao Portugueza*, Ambalakad, 1679. See Thani Nayakam 1966.

42. Diehl Papers, 2. D. p. 28.

43. Shaw 1987: 13.

44. These details are taken from Shaw 1987: 13–14.

45. Among Europeans in Madras, however, adopting Indian dress and customs was commonplace during the eighteenth century (Caplan 1995).

46. Bayly 1989: 380.

47. Grafe 1990: 25, fn. 1, statistics from 1750.

48. Grafe 1990: 25–6.

49. Muttusami Pillei 1933 [1822]; Muttusami Pillei 1840.

50. The main sources are Besse 1918; Ferroli 1951; see also Vinson 1899; Srinivasan 1954; Sorrentino 1980.

51. M. Arunachalam (1974: 277) wrote: 'All the works that go by the name of Beschi were the works of Supradipa [Kavirayar] ... no foreigner could grasp the thoughts that go into the making of *Catur Aharadi* or *Tonnul Vilakkam*.' See also Cuppiramaniyan 1978: 12. A leading French scholar, on the other hand, claimed that 'Guru Simpleton' is indisputably of European inspiration' (Vinson 1899: 125).

52. Muttusami Pillei 1933 [1822]: 44.

53. Hough 1824: 143.

54. Beschi 1844: ix.

55. Hudson 2000: 23.

56. Ziegenbalg and Grundler 1715: 26.

57. Eisenstein 1983: 153, quoting Maurice Gravier.

58. Kesavan 1985: 38–9.

59. Kesavan 1985: 40.

60. Shaw 1987: 7; Packiamuthu 1981: 23–4.

61. Shaw 1987: 7.

62. As quoted in Teltscher 1995: 101.

63. Besse 1918: 84–5.

64. Besse 1918: 85.

65. Muttusami Pillei 1933 [1822]: 38.

66. See Teltscher 1995 (chapter 3) on the differences between Jesuit and Lutheran missions in south India; the assumption of a link between printing and Protestantism, however, has been challenged in Alexandra Walsham's essay, 'Post-Reformation Catholicism and the culture of print' in *Past and Present* 2000.

67. Packiamuthu 1981: 23; Priolkar 1958: 42. The latter source claims that Finck died of fever.

68. As quoted in Teltscher 1995: 99.

69. As quoted in Hudson 2000: 16.

70. Muttusami Pillei [Pillai] 1840: 252, citing an unnamed essay by Ellis. Beschi's words were originally written in the Preface to his *Veta Vilakkam* (1729), which were then quoted in a Protestant church history, *Tirucapai carittira postakam* (1799).

71. Beschi 1842: 263.

72. Beschi 1842: 269–70; see the slightly different translation by Chitty (Chitty 1859: 75, footnote).

73. Srinivasan 1954: 303.

74. Beschi 1842: 273–4. Most citations and translations of this passage include the phrase 'burn the eyes', but printed books at that time were primarily heard.

75. Beschi 1842: 273–5.

76. Beschi 1842: 273–4; 'two schools of Saivism' translates *ul camayam* and *pura camayam*; '*Tirukkural*' translates *irati*; '*Nalatiyar*' translates *nalati*.

77. Besse 1918: 117, quoting Beschi's Annual Letter of 1731.

78. Hudson 2000: 47.

79. Besse 1918: 105.

80. Hudson 2000: 44.

81. Richter 1908: 111–12; Paul 1967: 33; Hudson 2000: 45.

82. Peterson forthcoming.

83. Father Bouchet, Beschi's successor, however, claimed that the Madurai Mission had thirty churches and that he alone had baptised 20,000 converts (Campbell 1921: 235).

84. Neill 1985: 75ff.

85. Neill 1985: 72.

86. Shaw 1987: 8.

87. Shaw 1987: 9.

88. Muthiah 1990: 385.

89. Fabricius' dictionary may have been based on an unpublished dictionary by Ziegenbalg (Meenakshisundaram 1974: 255).

90. For (conflicting) lists and dates of Beschi's dictionaries and other works, see Sommervogel 1890; Vinson 1900; Besse 1918; James 2000.

91. James 2000: 110–14; Meenakshisundaram 1974.

92. Meenakshisundaram 1974: 246. Beschi also used an alphabetical index in his *Veta vilakkam*.

93. James 2000: 154.

94. Zvelebil 1994, Vol. 2: 298.

95. Meenakshisundaram 1974: 169.

96. Muttusami Pillei [Pillai] 1840: Appendix 2.

97. On Beschi's grammar, see Meenakshisundaran 1961. *Nannul*, especially Arumukam Navalar's edition of this traditional grammar in 1850, was the key text for Tamil scholars.

98. OR ms 13586, OIOC. The British Library holds a second manuscript as well: OR ms 13044, OIOC.

99. Nanappirakacam 1985; Subbiah 1965/1966; Meenakshisundaram 1974: 170–1.

100. Meenakshisundaram 1974. In the Preface to his 1744 Tamil–French dictionary, Beschi gave some guidelines about how to use his new orthographic system (see the English translation in James 2000: 559–64).

101. Grafe 1990: 25.

102. Hudson 2000: 146.

103. For sources on commentarial prose in Tamil, see note 31, this chapter; on histories, see Narayana Rao, Shulman & Subrahmanyam 2001.

104. See Shulman forthcoming.

105. Nanappirakacam 1975: 13–16.

106. Nanappirakacam 1975: 17.

107. Meenakshisundaram 1974; Kailacapati 1987; Paramacivanantam 1966. Collections of folktales such as *Madanakamarajan katai* and *Vikkirama tittan katai* had little effect on Tamil Literary Culture.

108. *Madras tract and book society, Annual report, 1861.*

109. Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810) wrote children's stories, adapted from biblical narratives.

110. In his *Veta vilakkam*, Beschi 1842: 258–9.

111. Hudson 2000: 155.

112. Nanappirakacam's translation in Beschi 1975 [1845]. I am also indebted to Prof. Shackle, my colleague at SOAS, for preparing an English translation of Beschi's Latin Preface for me. Working from these two translations, I have prepared my own, from which the passages quoted below are taken.

113. Beschi's explanation for rule no. 14 (which governs sandhi after a final vowel) is for some reason omitted from the published Tamil translations of Beschi's Preface.

114. Babington (1822) notes many folktale and European sources for Beschi's tale, including Juvenal's *Satires*, which includes a reference to a tax on urine. Also see the contemporary review of Babington's text (*Asiatic Journal* 1822).

115. Vinson 1899: 125; Cuppiramaniyan 1978: 12.

116. These episodes are international tale-types AT 1287; AT 1319; AT 1240, respectively.

117. Beschi 1842: 258–9. The tale is AT 1692.

118. Besse 1918: 41.

119. This is possibly AT 1592A.

120. This is AT 1741, about which see Van der Kooi forthcoming.

121. Sankaran 1984: 282–5.

122. Crowquill 1861.
123. Babington 1822: iii–iv; Pope 1886: Preface; Meenakshisundaram 1974: 288.
124. Statistics on books and pamphlets in all languages registered in Madras are found in the Annual Reports on the Administration of the Madras Presidency, beginning in 1867.

Chapter 3
Pundits, Publishing and Protest: 1800–1850

1. The press was still in working order in 1826, when it was shown to a European visitor (Peterson 1999: 90).
2. This estimate is based on my own research and Diehl's (Diehl 1970: 11).
3. Muthiah 1987: 9.
4. Baker 1984: 75–5; Brimnes 1999: 144.
5. Neild 1977: 24–6.
6. Neild 1977: 14.
7. Wathen 1814: 25.
8. Wathen 1814: 31.
9. Wathen 1814: 32.
10. The estimated number of Armenian merchants comes from Neild 1977: 24.
11. Viswanatha Iyer 1939.
12. Muthiah 1987: 42–3; Shaw 1987: 9; Lockyer 1977.
13. During the 1830s, the *Madras Times* and the *Spectator* joined the major newspapers, but little is recorded about them. This information is found in the annual issues of the *Madras Almanac*.
14. The *Madras Male Asylum Herald*, however, was an exception.
15. Ellis letter to Rev. Kerr, 2 January 1800; Ms Tamil C.19, Bodleian Library, Oriental Reading Room.
16. The first Telugu types were cast in Germany, in Halle, in the 1740s.
17. Ellis letter to Rev. Kerr (undated, but after 2 January 1800); Ms Tamil C.19, Bodleian Library, Oriental Reading Room.
18. Samy 2000: 23.
19. Barns 1940: 59.
20. Samy 2000: 30.

21. *Madras Male Asylum Herald* 8 July 1835.

22. Srinivasachari 1939: 213.

23. MPP/244/57, 14 October 1819.

24. MPP/246/68, 24 January 1834; MPP/246/76, 2 June 1834.

25. Viswanatha Iyer 1939: 452.

26. Arbuthnot 1886: 538.

27. Arbuthnot 1886: 541.

28. Hirschman 1989: 489; Kopf 1969: 189–92.

29. The other Tamil presses in Madras were: Maca Tinacaritai, 1812; Commercial Press, 1817 (owned by Nanappirakaca Pillai); Sanmukam Vilacam Press, 1829, Ravana Press, 1830; Karnataka Carittiram Press, 1833; Kalvi Vilakkam Press, 1834. Diehl (1970: 11) claims an Iyal Tamil Vilakkam Press (1819) was owned by Tiruvenkata Mutaliyar in Kancipuram, but I have seen no evidence to confirm this.

30. The 1809 pamphlet of fifty-nine pages, entitled *Karaikkal Ammaiyar carittira kirttanai*, was printed in Madras by the Attiniyam ant Teli Niyus Piras (Athenaeum [?] and Daily News Press). Outside Madras, the earliest Tamil books published by Tamils for Tamils are: *Kantar antati*, Colombo, 1804; *Ampai talapuranam*, Laksmi Vilaca Press, Ampacamuttiram, 1812; *Palacarakku elappattu*, Sri Natesa Vilacam Press, Tiruvanantapuram, 1818. Copies of these books are in the Roja Muthiah Research Library in Madras.

31. Chitty 1859: 104.

32. MPP/244/1, 2 April 1811, letter by John Babington.

33. MPP/243/62, 1 June 1810.

34. Trautmann 1999; see also Sudhir 1993.

35. Zvelebil 1992: 160 fn. 38

36. Mss Eur D 151, 21 July 1816, letter, OIOC.

37. Mss Eur D 151, 8 April 1816, letter from London to Fort St George, OIOC.

38. The text is described and analysed in an anonymous article in *Valluvam* 1 (1999): 21–4, which is the source of my information and quotations from the publication. See also Cami [Samy] 1993: 29–31.

39. Samy [Cami] 2000: 27.

40. This information, from a palm-leaf manuscript of the 1812 book in the National Library in Calcutta, is found in *Valluvam* 1 (1999).

41. Advani 1989: 492.

42. Trautmann 1997: 113–17.

43. Trautmann 2000: 49–50. Tamil (unlike Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindustani, and later Bengali, Telugu and Marathi) was not taught at Haileybury by a Professor (Stephens 1900). Perhaps the most influential Tamil teacher was Robert Anderson, who taught at Haileybury between 1821 and 1825; he published a Tamil grammar, which was printed in London in 1822 but used at the College of Fort St George, and also developed Tamil types.

44. Lockyer 1977:•337.

45. MPP/244/10, 3 March 1812.

46. 'Rules for the College of Fort St George', 1 January 1813, Eur Mss, D 30, OIOC.

47. MPP/244/44, 17 March 1815.

48. *Government Gazette* 6 July 1820.

49. MPP/244/44, 17 March 1815.

50. MPP/244/12, 1 May 1812.

51. Munro Papers, Eur Mss, F 151, part 110, OIOC; MPP for various years.

52. MPP/246/68, 24 January 1834.

53. Trautmann 1999.

54. Ellis 1818; Ellis 1827; Ellis 1822. Ellis' translation and commentary of part of the *Tirukkural*, which relied on Beschi's earlier manuscript, was apparently published by the College in 1816 in a very small print run. See Pope 1886 and Sethu Pillai 1955 for modern editions of this text.

55. Ms Tamil C.19, Bodleian Library; Mss Eur D 336, 'Ellis memorandum respecting Tamil prosody', OIOC.

56. Ellis 1816.

57. The circumstances leading to his death are described in his Will, a copy of which is in the OIOC (Thomas Trautmann, personal communication, 1 January 2002).

58. MPP/244/10, 3 March 1812.

59. MPP/244/43, 3 February 1815.

60. MPP/244/62, 7 May 1817.

61. In 1830, five rupees would also have purchased about 25 kilograms of paddy (*Madras Almanac for 1830*: 58; Raju 1941: 229). By 1850, however, the price for Beschi's book came down to two rupees, as sold by a publisher in Pondicherry.

62. MPP/244/45, 23 June 1815.

63. MPP/245/79, 7 November 1826.

64. MPP/244/58, 25 November 1816.

65. MPP /244 /58, 25 November 1816.

66. Zvelebil 1994, Vol. 2: 340.

67. Campantan 1980: 132.

68. MPP/244/47, 11 September 1815.

69. MPP/245/69, 20 December 1825.

70. Chitty 1859: 55–6.

71. Chitty 1859: 55–6.

72. Biographical details based on Kapalamurtti Pillai 1919; Campantan 1980: 205–7.

73. MPP/245/64, 24 April 1825.

74. An 1833 book from the Karnataka Carittiram Press contains a notice for thirty-four books; in 1834 the Kalvi Vilakkam Press listed twenty-five others, with seven more in press and eight planned. Other titles were identified in the OIOC.

75. See note 29, this chapter.

76. MPP/246/87, 25 August 1835.

77. Venkatacuvami 1962: 93.

78. *Madras Male Asylum Herald* 30 September 1835.

79. Narayana Rao (forthcoming) also describes pundit-publishers in Telugu in this period, although they stifled modernisation of the langauge and did not, apparently, participate in public politics.

80. On the changes they introduced into their edition of the *Kural*, see Geetha and Rajadurai 1993.

81. Chitty 1859: 84.

82. Saiva classics printed by the Aiyar brothers include: Tayumanavar's *Tiruppatal tirattu*, part of *Tirumurai*, *Tiruvacakam* and *Tirukkovaiyar*, *Venkkai kovai* and *Civappirakaca kattalai*.

83. The text was *Civappirakaca Kattalai*.

84. See Ramaswamy 1997 on these leaders of the neo-Saiva movement.

85. Zvelebil (1992: 160), following Venkatacuvami (1962: 192), claims that Ramanuja Kavirayar owned a press, and Chitty (1859: 112) claims that Vetagiri Mutaliyar also owned a press; however, I found nothing in the historical record to substantiate these claims.

86. Diehl 1970: 11.

87. This was also the period when Tamil Christians began to use print to debate religious doctrine (Hudson 1985: 187).

88. LMS Church, Davidson Street, George Town, 1810; St George's, Teynampet, 1815; St. Andrews Church, west of Vepery, 1821; Church Missionary Society (Tucker's) Church, Popham's Broadway, George Town, 1820 (delayed after protests in 1817); LMS Methodist Church, Popham's Broadway, George Town, 1822; St Matthias, Vepery, 1817. Details in Muthiah 1987.

89. Raman 1999.

90. Grafe 1990: 150.

91. *Report of the Directors to the General Meeting of the Missionary Society (1852)*: 25.

92. The congregation fluctuated between fifty and one hundred and fifty in the 1840s, as reported in the issues of the annual *Report of the Directors to the General Meeting of the Missionary Society*.

93. Neild 1977: 137–77.

94. Trautmann 1997; Washbrook 1999.

95. Raman 1999: 66, 70–2.

96. Muthiah 1987: 220.

97. *Church Missionary Record* 1835: 92–3.

98. MPP/246/68, 22 February 1834.

99. Grafe 1990: 150.

100. Norton 1848: 57ff.

101. MPP/246/79, 9 January 1835.

102. MPP/246/79, 21 August 1835.

103. MPP/246/79, 21 August 1835.

104. Despite the lack of government support, the Society also operated a library, which in 1855 was reported to have one hundred and twenty-seven members and 1096 books; the officers of the library were mostly non-Brahmin. (*Third Annual Report, Madras Hindu Reading Room, 1855*).

105. Neild 1977: 203–8; Raman 1999: 70.

106. Raman 1999: 71.

107. Raman 1999: 70.

108. Raman 1999: 74.

109. *Report of the Directors to the General Meeting of the Missionary Society (1841)*: 49.

110. *Report of the Directors to the General Meeting of the Missionary Society 1843*: 57.

111. Grafe 1990: 158.

112. Raman 1999: 83; Grafe 1990: 156.

113. Raman 1999: 96–7.

114. Raman 1999: 97; MPP/Consultations 16 June 1847.

115. Kapalamurtti Pillai 1919.

116. Raman 1999: 98–9.

117. Because the Tamil name of the *Madras Magazine* is unknown, it is often referred to in secondary sources as *Tamil Pattrikai*, a translation from the English title.

118. *Native Intelligencer* is called *Native Interpreter* in Suntharalingam 1974: 143.

119. Paramaswaran Pillai 1902: 196.

120. As quoted in Suntharalingam 1974: 44.

121. Paramaswaran Pillai 1902: 206.

122. Suntharalingam 1974; see also Frykenberg 1971; Brimnes 1999.

123. Suntharalingam 1974: 139–52.

124. Washbrook 1999.

125. As quoted in Frykenberg 1971: 574–5.

126. Norton 1848: 32.

127. Norton 1841: iii.

128. Details of Pillay's and Chetty's lives are found in Suntharalingam 1974: 36–51; Paramaswaran Pillai 1902: 193–207; Srinivasachari 1939: 258.

129. Suntharalingam 1974; Raman 1999.

130. Madras Native Association 1859.

131. Madras Native Association 1859: 19–20.

132. Madras Native Association 1859: 20.

133. Makalinga Aiyar owed his position at Presidency College to the generosity of Ramanuja Kavirayar, another College pundit; when Kavirayar was interviewed for the post of Tamil pundit, he was asked to give an example of a shortened final 'u'. Without hesitating, he answered, *'enakku teriyatu'* ['I don't know'] and suggested that Mahalinka Aiyar be appointed instead (Ramacuvami Pulavar 1955, Vol. 2: 99–105).

134. One Memorial was printed in a Tamil newspaper (Raman 1999: 99).

135. Singarapelavanderam Pillay 1859.

136. My own translation of this extremely nonstandard writing is uncertain in two or three places.

137. The corruption narrated in the 1859 text is quite similar to that described in an anonymous document, purporting to be a petition to the Madras government, received by John Norton (Norton 1854: 147–51).

138. *Report on public instruction in the Madras Presidency, 1855–56*,

Appendix A, books and pamphlets printed and published in the town of Madras during the year 1855.

139. C.P. Brown, quoted in Schmitthenner 2001: 211.

140. An accurate history of these Tamil periodicals, despite the valuable book by Samy (2000), is still to be written. A 1840 pamphlet published by Kalvi Kalanciyam, for example, promised to supply issues of two otherwise unknown periodicals (*Parata Pattirikai* and *Carvartta Cintamani Camacara Pattirikai*); and there must be many more.

141. Viswanatha Iyer 1939: 455.

142. A government source noted that most of the Tamil printers and publishers in Madras in 1885 were sons and relatives of the early pundit-publishers (*Manual of the administration of the Madras Presidency*, Vol.1: 550)

143. Shaw 1999.

Chapter 4
Printed Folktales and the New Vernacular: 1820–1860

1. Joyes and Samuel 1848: Preface.

2. Chitty 1859: iv–v.

3. For later permutations of these positions, see Ramaswamy 1997, chapter 2.

4. Raeside 1970: 78.

5. MMP/245/79, 31 October 1826.

6. MPP/245/79, 7 November 1826.

7. The unconfirmed titles are *Muppattirantu patumai katai* in 1804; *Catamuka Ravana katai* in 1808; *Mariyatai Raman katai* in 1812 (Paramacivanantam 1966: 95); *Pururava Cakravartti katai* in 1819 (Diehl 1981: xxxii). See Appendix.

8. Abbe Dubois' French translation of the *Pancatantra*, which included a version of Babington's 1822 translation of Beschi's 'Guru Simpleton', was also published in 1826, in Paris, but does not appear to be based on Tantavaraya Mutaliyar's text.

9. See Blackburn 2001b (77–8) for an oral version of this tale.

10. For an account of folktales told in Tamil, see Blackburn 2001b. Because some of the tales printed by the College do not correspond to international tale-types, it is not always possible to determine their distribution in other parts of India.

11. The Telugu *Pancatantra* was judged to be of poor quality by the Madras-based Telugu scholar C.P. Brown, but was nevertheless reprinted because of the text's extraordinary popularity (Schmitthenner 2001: 62, note 80).

12. On Munro's scheme and school statistics for the early nineteenth century, see Subramanian 1994: 299–309.

13. Arbuthnot 1855: 37.

14. Norton 1848: 54.

15. Arbuthnot 1855: 82. Fees were reported to be high; between 1841 and 1855 only 36 Proficient's Degrees (requiring four years of study) were awarded: 20 Brahmins; 12 Non-Brahmins; 1 Indian Christian; 3 Eurasians (Ibid.). Between 1857 and 1896 total higher education degrees awarded in the Madras Presidency increased from about 1,000 to 26,000 (Suntharalingam 1974: 109).

16. Sharma 1976: 91–4 (cited in Annamalai 2001: 5).

17. *First Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras University, 1842*: 32; Arbuthnot 1855: Appendix V, 26 July 1841, Minute from the Governors of the Madras University to Government.

18. *First Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras University, 1842*: 31.

19. Ibid., 31–2.

20. Ibid., 32.

21. *First Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras University, 1842*; Arbuthnot 1855: Appendix V, 26 July 1841 Minute from the Board of Governors of the Madras University to Government.

22. *Fourth Annual Report of the Governors of the Madras University*, 1845: 14.

23. Viswanathan 1989: 47; 82–3.

24. Norton 1848: 54.

25. *Fourth Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras University, 1845*: 16.

26. Ibid.

27. Tiruvenkatapillai 1853: i.

28. (As quoted in Venkatacuvami 1962: 126) Vicakaperumal Aiyar 1852: Preface (my translation).

29. In concurrent but quite different developments for Telugu, a 'language czar' (pundit at the College of Fort St George, and later at Madras University, who wrote the Telugu version of the *Pancatantra* printed by the College) held back the formation of a modern prose idiom by his preference for literary, archaic and Sanskritised diction and grammar (Narayana Rao forthcoming).

30. Naregal 2001.

31. *Second Annual Report of the Governors of the Madras University, 1843*:
    16; MPP/245/2, 26 March 1819.

32. *Second Annual Report of the Governors of the Madras University, 1843*: 18.

33. *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Governors of the Madras University, 1853–54*: 100.

34. Ibid.

35. A favourable account of Murdoch's life is given in Morris 1906.

36. Murdoch 1865: 203–4.

37. Murdoch 1872: 18.

38. Murdoch 1872: 17.

39. Murdoch 1872: 17–18.

40. *Report of the committee for the revision of English, Telugu and Tamil school books in the Madras Presidency*, Madras 1875: 83.

41. Ibid., 92–3.

42. (emphasis in original) Murdoch 1881: viii.

43. As quoted in Murdoch 1872: 16–17.

44. As quoted in Murdoch 1865: lxxx.

45. Murdoch 1881: viii.

46. On fables and political satire in English, see Lewis 1996.

47. Murdoch 1872: 15.

48. *Report of the committee for the revision of English, Telugu and Tamil school books in the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1875: Appendix, ix.

49. Rajaruthnam Pillay 1921: Preface.

50. On this novel, see Blackburn 1998.

51. Nambi Arooran 1980: 100.

52. *Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, 1875–76*: 90.

Chapter 5
Folklore and the Nation: 1860–1880

1. Blackburn 2002.

2. See, for example, Jones 1989; Chatterjee 1986; Chatterjee 1993; Dalmia 1997; Ramaswamy 1997.

3. As quoted in Hay 1988: 20.

4. See the discussion in Hudson 1992: 37, passim.

5. Venkatachalapathy 1999.

6. Roy 1995: 57–9.

7. Chatterjee 1993: 72–5.

8. Mss Eur. F48, Elliot Papers, pt. 21, p. 165, OIOC.

9. Chitty 1859: Preface. Another Tamil scholar, Besse (1918: 160), dismissed Beschi's legends in similar terms.

10. Chatterjee 1993: 95.

11. The quotation is from Ben Amos 1972: 14. On domestic and public folk genres in India, see Ramanujan 1996.

12. See Blackburn 2001b.

13. See Bendix 1997; Hobsbawm 1993; Oinas 1978; Herzfeld 1982.

14. Biographical details of the Grimms are found in Tatar 1987; Bottigheimer 1991; Zipes 1983.

15. Tatar 1987: 215.

16. Tatar 1987: 209.

17. Tatar 1987: 213.

18. This summary is based on Wilson 1976.

19. On Lönnrot reconstruction of the epic, see Dundes 1985.

20. Wilson 1976: 42–52.

21. Wilson 1976: 47–8.

22. Trumpener 1997.

23. Trumpener 1997: 76.

24. On Macpherson's fabrication, see Dundes 1985.

25. Trumpener 1997: 77.

26. Trumpener 1997: 21–3.

27. On early historical writing in Indian languages, see Guha 1988: 27–47; Chatterjee 1993, chapter 4; Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2001.

28. The first modern literary history in Bengali appeared in 1872–3 (*Bangla bhasa o bangla sahitya bisayak prastab*, written by Ramgati Nayayaratna, who also translated an English-language history of Bengal into Bengali in 1859). On literary historical writing in Hindi, see Dalmia 1997.

29. Venkataramasvamie 1829.

30. Chitty 1859: v.

31. See also Cutler forthcoming.

32. On colonial anthropology in India, see Pinney 1991.

33. Burgess 1872: 1.

34. Ibid.

35. On Crooke, see Dorson 1968: 341–8; Amin 1989; Vatuk 1999; Bayly 1996: 354–6.

36. On Temple, see Dorson 1968: 337–41; Naithani 1997.

37. Naithani (1997: 3) claims that *Punjab Notes and Queries* 'accepted contributions only from British officials', but Kirkland's bibliography (1966) lists many entries by Mall China alone.

38. *Folklore of Gujarat, being legends, and stories of the princes and peasantry of Gujarat and Kathiavad, from oral tradition only,* Vol. 1, 1872; *Manoranjaka Katha* 1872; Chhatre 1871; Percival 1874; Raya 1877.

39. The Gujarati folklorist-historian Ranjitram Vababhai Mehta is mentioned by Chandra (1994: 152–4).

40. On Tagore, see Korom 1989; Sircar 1997.

41. Ramaswamy 1997; Irschick 1969; Nambi Arooran 1976; Washbrook 1976. See also Ramaswamy 2001.

42. Beschi 1744: Preface.

43. Ellis letter to John Leyden, dated Madras, 1808: Eur. Mss D 30, Erskine Papers, pp. 130–1, OIOC; Ellis Ms on Tamil prosody, Eur Mss D 336, Walter Elliot Papers, p. 75, OIOC.

44. Irschick 1994: 101–4.

45. Ellis 1827: 16.

46. Caldwell 1875: Introduction, 47.

47. Ibid.: Introduction, 150.

48. Ibid.: Introduction, 50.

49. Ibid.: 492–3. This essay has been omitted from the 3rd edition of Caldwell's book (in 1956) and its reprints.

50. Hardgrave 1969: chapter 3; Dirks 1995; Ravindran 1996. The quotation is from a 1911 pamphlet by P. Pandion, a Nadar Christian (Hardgrave 1969: 88).

51. Gover 1871: xviii.

52. Gover 1871: xix.

53. Gover 1871: xix–xx.

54. On the appeal of this egalitarian Tamil poetry to missionaries, see Blackburn 2000; Irschick 1986: 14–17.

55. Blackburn 1988: 201–2.

56. Gover 1871: 217.

57. Gover 1871: 6–8.

58. Robinson 1873 (2nd edition in 1885).

59. Robinson 1885: 2.

60. Robinson 1885: 1.

61. Caldwell Jr. 1872: 101.
62. Frere 1881 [1868]: xii. For a new study of this classic text, see Narayan forthcoming.
63. Frere 1881 [1868], xiii.
64. Ibid., xiv.
65. Talboys-Wheeler 1869: 6.
66. Crooke 1894: 186; Grierson 1906: 278; Risley and Gait 1903: 500–2.
67. Murdoch 1881: vii–viii.
68. On this text and verse, see Blackburn 2000.
69. On Bharati's debt to folk songs, see Venkatachalapathy 1999; on Bharati as a modernist, see Ramanujan 1999: 332–344.
70. See Michelle Maskiell (1999) on the use of verbal and material folk culture to construct an image of the 'timeless village' in colonial and post-colonial Punjab.
71. These biographical details are taken from: Asher 1971; Sastri 1908; *Kalaikkalanciyam* 1959: 286.
72. Sastri 1908: Preface.
73. See Sastri's entries in Kirkland 1966.
74. *The Madras Times* 12 April 1906, p. 5.
75. Lal Behari Day, a Bengali Christian (1824–94), also published a collection of folktales and books on peasant life, but his research and writings were neither international nor comparative. See Sen Gupta 1965: 1–21.
76. Kingscote and Sastri 1890; Sastri 1908.
77. Sastri 1908: Preface.
78. Ibid. The first Tamil volume is Sastri 1886a; the second is Sastri 1886b.
79. Sastri 1908: Preface.
80. Ibid.
81. Sastri 1886a: Preface (my translation).
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Sastri 1886c: Preface.
85. Ibid.
86. Sastri 1900: Preface.
87. *Madras Weekly Mail* 17 March 1886, p. 19.
88. Ibid.
89. *The Madras Times* (no further details), as quoted in Sastri 1888: 8.
90. *The Madras Standard* (no further details), as quoted in Sastri 1888: 9.

91. Review by L.V. Schroeder, as quoted in Sastri 1888: 11.

92. *Madras Weekly Mail* 17 March 1886, 19.

93. *The Hindu,* October 1886, as quoted in Sastri 1888: 3.

94. *Madras Christian College Magazine*, May 1886, Vol. 3, as quoted in Sastri 1888: 2.

95. This anonymous essay is printed in Sastri 1908: 7–11; the cited passage is on page 9.

96. Asher 1971: 109.

97. Sastri 1908: 4.

98. Ibid.

99. Sastri 1900: Preface.

100. Ibid.

101. Purnalingam Pillai 1897.

102. When the Tamil versions of Sastri's folktale collection were reprinted in 1958, they were rewritten in pure Tamil.

103. Purnalingam Pillai 1897: Preface.

104. Swaminathan 1984 (especially 'The present condition of our people', pp. 51–3).

Chapter 6
Conclusions and Extensions

1. For literacy statistics in Madras, see note 60, chapter 1. 'Silent reading' in Tamil only developed after the turn of the century (Venkatachalapathy 1994).

2. Eisenstein 1983: 78.

3. Bendix 1997: 35; Schwab 1984: 57–61, passim.

4. See Mack 1992.

5. As quoted in Thompson 1977 [1946]: 369.

6. As quoted in Thompson 1977 [1946]: 376.

7. Fraser 1994: xix.

8. Gomme 1968 [1892]: 332–5.

9. Clouston 1887: 432–43.

10. As quoted in Sastri 1888: 7.

11. *Indian Fairy Tales* (1880); *Folktales of Bengal* (1883); *Wide-Awake Tales* (1884); *Folktales of Kashmir* (1888); *Indian Fairy Tales* (1889); *Tales of the Sun* (1890); *Indian Night's Entertainments* (1892); *Indian Fairy Tales*

(1892); *Tales of the Punjab* (1894); *The Talking Thrush* (1899); *Indian Fables* (1901).

12. On this history of the *Pancatantra*, see Blackburn 1996.

13. Colebrooke's English translation of the *Hitopadesa* was printed at Serampore in 1804, and Dubois included a few *Pancatantra* tales in his 1816 *Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies*.

14. As quoted in Byatt 2000: 37.

15. Ramanujan 1993.

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Index

Print, Folklore, and Nationalism
in Colonial South India

Shifting emphasis from the effects to the uses of print, this book examines the intersection of printing and folklore in the context of colonial South India. It provides a history of printed books in Tamil and argues that printing must be examined alongside a set of literary practices that were largely set in train by the encounter with Europeans and European languages. The author examines the beginnings of the press, his study ranging over three centuries of book publishing: from the activities of the early missionaries, to publishing at the College of Fort St George, as well as local responses through print.

The core of the book describes the uses of print in nineteenth-century Madras, especially the early decades, when pundits set up presses that campaigned against missionary activity and produced books of folklore that were used first in schools and later in nationalist discourse. The book identifies two distinct Tamil formulations of folklore and the nation, which are set against a backdrop of their European counterparts.

STUART BLACKBURN taught for many years at SOAS, London University. He has authored numerous books connected with Tamil literature and history, and is co-editor (with Vasudha Dalmia) of *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century* (Permanent Black, 2003).