



Walking in the footsteps of Vipulānanta Aṭikaḷ and Xavier S. Thani Nayagam

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Jean-Luc Chevillard. Walking in the footsteps of Vipulānanta Aṭikaḷ and Xavier S. Thani Nayagam: an attempted enumeration of the musical instruments mentionned in Antaõ de Proença's 1679 Vocabulario Tamulico com a Significaçam Portuguesa. (Ver 4a). 3rd European Tamil Conference" [], Sep 2018, Paris, France. halshs-04049320

HAL Id: halshs-04049320

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-04049320>

Submitted on 30 Mar 2023

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Walking in the footsteps of **Vipulānanta Aṭikaḷ** and **Xavier S. Thani Nayagam**: an attempted enumeration of the musical instruments mentionned in Antaõ de Proença's 1679 *Vocabulario Tamulico com a Significaçam Portuguesa*. **(Ver 4a)**

[Written version of an oral communication on 08/09/2018 at the 3rd European Tamil Conference in Paris]

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0. Introduction

Fifty-two years ago, in 1966, in Kuala Lumpur, a book was published, which was a facsimilé of an ancient dictionary (See Figure 1: *Vocabulario Tamulico*, henceforth VT) of which a single copy remains, in the Vatican library in Rome.



Figure 1
1679 Vocabulario (Title page)

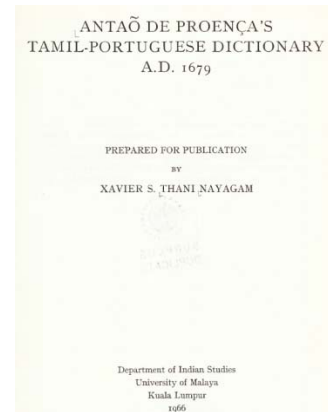
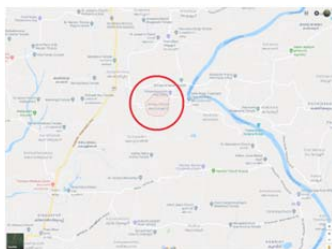
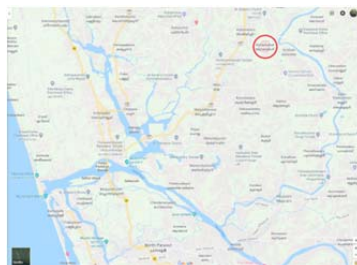


Figure 2
1966 Facsimilé reprint (title page)

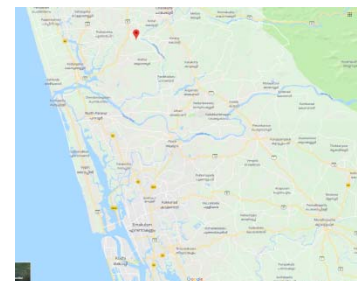
Its title page indicated that it had been printed in 1679 in a place referred to as 'Ambalacatta', which can nowadays be found on maps as **Ambazhakad**, not very far from Kodungallur, North of Ernakulam and Kochi, as indicated on maps 1, 2 and 3, below.



Map1
Ambazhakad (Ambalacatta)



Map 2
Ambazhakad to Kodungallur



Map3
Ambalakkad to Cochin (Kochi)

The reason for the facsimilé book (see Figure1) to be published in Kuala Lumpur was the energy deployed by a Tamil scholar, named Xavier S. Thani Nayagam [1913-1980] (henceforth XTN). That

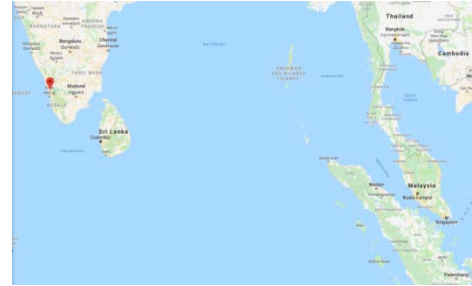
scholar had travelled all over the world (see maps 4 and 5), exploring the holdings of various libraries, where precious Tamil sources were preserved.



Map 4
Ambalakkad to Italy



Photograph 1
Xavier Thani Nayagam



Map 5
Ambalakkad to Kuala Lumpur

I cannot of course even start to enumerate here the many activities and discoveries performed by XTN, and therefore I shall now try to dive into my core topic, which is a partial report on some ongoing activities, involving several researchers, and on the relationships between those current activities and researches conducted in earlier periods by scholars such as Xavier S. Thani Nayagam and Vipulānanta Aṭikaḷ [1892-1947], another famous Tamil scholar, who is at the center of our collective attention today, in this third international Tamil Conference (Paris, september 2018), and from whom many have derived inspiration.

1. The history of musical practices as an object of research

Everyone who has tried to read *Yāl Nūḷ* (யால் நூல், henceforth YN) that famous book written by Vipulānanta Aṭikaḷ (henceforth VA) and published in 1947 knows that its importance lies in the fact that, as noted by நீ. கந்தசாமி [1898-1977] in his முகவுரை (dated 5.6.1947) to YN, although Tamil scholars had had access since 1892 to the full text of the சிலப்பதிகாரம், many technical components of that text (and especially its third canto, அரங்கேற்றுக் காதை) had remained very difficult to understand, because of the loss of Tamil ancient technical literature about music. The high value of YN was based on the fact that by closely examining the remaining fragments of technical texts, by comparing them with other components of ancient Tamil literature, such as *Nikaṇṭu-s*, and by scrutinizing Śaiva Tamil ancient sources (such the *Tirumurai kaṇṭa purāṇam*), Śaiva living practices (related to the singing of the *Tēvāram*) and some Sanskrit treatises, VA had been capable of shedding some light on passages which had until then been often perceived as incomprehensible. As in any living field of research, there are of course still many healthy debates concerning the most appropriate interpretation of many passages, as will be clear to any one who tries to read for instance the 2010 தமிழிசைப் பேரகராதி (சொற்களஞ்சியம்), for which the தொகுப்பாசிரியர் was நா. மம்மது. And therefore, my main ambition in this presentation is to point out that there are still important sources which have not yet been examined and which could, if properly explored, contribute to a better factual knowledge of the past musical practices of Tamil Nadu, as they were partly recorded by Antaõ de Proença [1625-1666] and transmitted by those who posthumously edited and printed his manuscript, making it into a book which is now available to us, thanks to XTN. I should also mention at that stage that others, such as Gregory James and Cristina Muru (whose names will be evoked again), have also devoted many

efforts towards a better knowledge of Proença's VT, which I shall from now onwards refer to here as VTCSP (*Vocabulário Tamulico, Com a Significação Portuguesa*), because that is its full title (see Figure 1). From that I shall also argue that the importance of knowing (ancient) Portuguese for studying some Tamil Sources should be emphasized (especially when addressing here the younger generation whose future is still in the planning stage, but who might some day write a Ph.D. thesis on such topics). But this will hopefully become clearer when I start to describe the VTCSP in its materiality, as I shall do presently.

2. How to locate entries in Proença's *Vocabulário*?

I shall concretely start this exploration by examining one entry taken from the VTCSP. That entry will certainly be very familiar to many who are here, although the typographical form by which we are given access to it may not be familiar to those who have never seen a Tamil palm leaf MS or an old book. That entry (see inside figure 3) is காமபொதி, which in a modern book would be nowadays printed as காம்போதி, with a புள்ளி on the ம, and with a typographical distinction between long போ and short பொ, which did not exist in ancient writing practice.¹

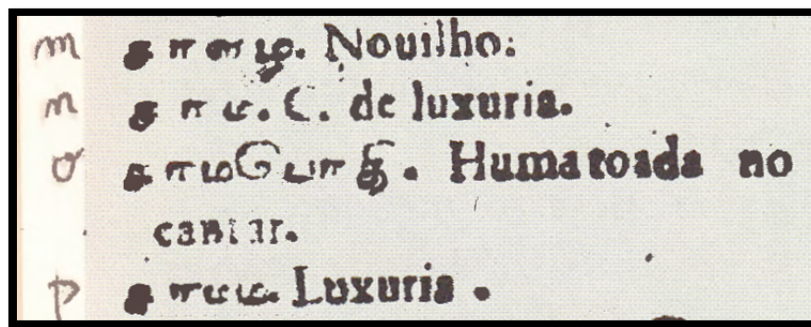


Figure 3
Entries 280_L_m to 280_L_p inside VTCSP

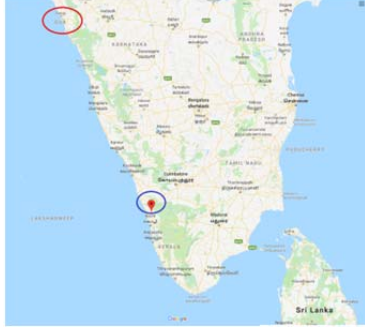
This being our first real contact with the VTCSP, I must first of all explain the conventions which I use for referring to its entries. The book fragment which is shown in Figure 3 contains four entries, taken from the Left side column of a page, which is the 280th page (as per my count), although it does NOT have a page number. That left side column will be referred to here as column 280_L² and contains all in all 17 entries, which I distinguish by means of a lower case letter, going from a to q. The four entries which appear here are the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th entries and they are therefore referred to as 280_L_m, 280_L_n, 280_L_o and 280_L_p, their head items being respectively “காழை”, “காம”, “காமபொதி” and “காமம்”. The reader can however see that not all the letters are perfectly printed and therefore I shall now mention another resource which is available as an additional help for deciphering the 1679 book. As clearly explained by Gregory James in his 2009 article, the printed book is in fact a partly expurgated version of a more complete text, which is preserved in MS form in a library in Goa³ (See Map 6). To this I must add that I am fortunate enough

¹ See Chevillard[2015], « The challenge of bi-directional translation ... ».

² Symetrically, the right-side columns is column 280_R.

³ The library is the State Central Library of Goa, Panaji/Panjim.

to have access to a set of photographs of such a MS (distinguished as MS “M-34”⁴ inside the Goa collection), these photographs having been made in 2007 in Goa by my colleague Cristina Muru, a linguist from the university of Viterbo in Italy, who specializes on the work of the missionaries who have written about Tamil.



Map 6
from Ambazhakad to Goa

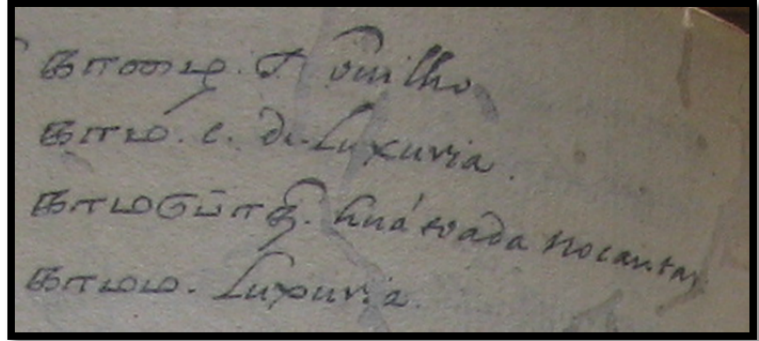


Figure 4
Extract from Goa MS34
(corresponding to Figure 3)

As should be clear, one document (be it book or MS) is not necessarily easier to read than another one but when comparing the two documents, it is generally the case that (IF the reading is the same) the difficulties will frequently cancel each other. I can therefore offer as a reading for those four entries the following:

- (1a) காதலு. Nouilho [Entry 280_L_m] “young bullock (or calf)”⁵
- (1b) காம. c. de luxuria [Entry 280_L_n] “lustful”⁶
- (1c) காமபொதி. Huma toada no cantar. [Entry 280_L_o] “a melody in singing”
- (1d) காமம். Luxuria. [Entry 280_L_p] “lust”

3. Magnitude of the work and conventions for transcription

A general idea having been given of the nature of the source which we are examining, I should hasten to say that what I am presenting here is only a small fragment, extracted from a **work in progress**, which is very far from completion, although its final order of magnitude can at this stage be rather precisely estimated. As already indicated, the entries section of the printed book version of

⁴ The catalogue number has in fact since been changed to Ms50, but the bottom of each page still contains the old MS reference number “M-34”, combined with a page number.

⁵ We have two difficulties here with this entry: (A) காதலு seems to be the dialectal form of standard காளை “steer, young bullock”; (B) the Portuguese word used for rendering it seems to have a slightly different semantic field.

⁶ Since the center of my interest in this presentation is the musical entry, I shall not elaborate here on the relationship between entries (1b) and (1d) but shall content myself with saying that 1b (which is in fact the sandhi form of 1d) is treated by the portuguese author as if it was an adjectival form of 1d. This is indicated by the (standard) presence of the abbreviation “c.” for “cousa” (“thing”), playing the role of a virtual head noun for which காமம் is the specifier.

Proença's VTCSP (dated 1679) contains 508 pages⁷ and each of those pages has entries on 2 columns. If we add together the counts of entries on each of those 1016 columns, we reach a total of 16,209 entries (as per my current count). It can be further added that almost all of those 1016 columns (except on the first and the last page) seem to contain 29 printed lines and that the total number of printed lines can therefore be estimated to be 14,722. We can therefore conclude that entries (1a) to (1d), above, which correspond to five printed lines (see Figure 3) represent not more than 0.034 % of the total text, i.e. one part in three thousands. I should also point out that while most entries are short (like the one in Figure 3), VTCSP also contains longer entries, such as the following

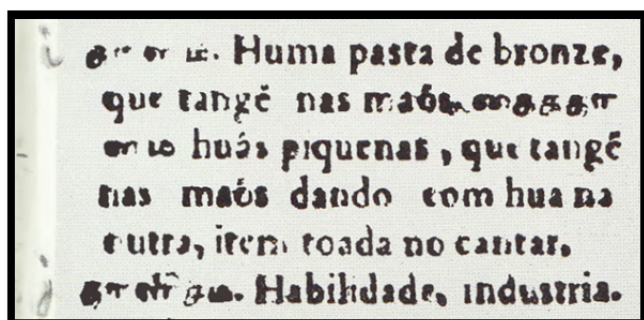


Figure 5

Entry 351_L_i (in VTCSP): தாளம்

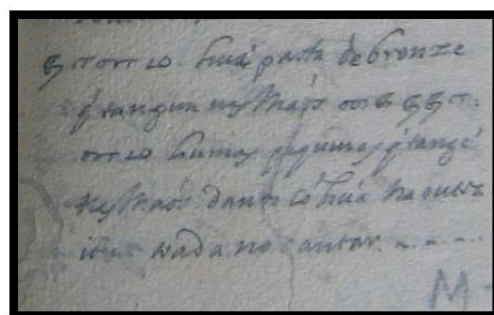


Figure 6

Goa MS equivalent of Figure 5

An attempted transcription of entry 351_L_i is now provided, where the line changes are indicated by a double slash ("//"), and where I also introduce, as a special notation, the use of the symbol "#", in order to **respect the ambiguity** inherent in the ancient Tamil writing system and not to decide prematurely whether what we see is "ra" (ர), "r" (ர்) or the symbol (traditionally called கால் "leg") which indicates the presence of a long ā, combined with a consonantal glyph. My transcription is therefore as follows :

- (2) த # ள ம். Huma pasta de bronze, // que tangẽ nas mãos. கை த த # // ள ம் huãs piquenas, que tangẽ nas mãos dando com hua na // outra, item toada no cantar.

It is not clear to me whether it is appropriate for me to try to provide here a complete English translation of the Portuguese gloss. Independently of the fact that what I am presenting here is a "work in progress" and that my command of the Portuguese language is still very limited, the tantalizing nature of the source is possibly better demonstrated to the audience by the confrontation with PARTLY RAW data. There has to come a time when the younger section of the audience comes to realize that studying Tamil sources requires the learning of additional languages,

⁷ Those 508 pages are preceded by a group of 18 pages containing (A) the various certificate (or « censura ») attesting that it was licit from the point of view of the church to print such a book, as well as (B) a series of linguistic explanations (by Proença) concerning the order followed for the entries, which is rather complicated to use, because it mainly follows the Portuguese alphabetical order (although the script used is the Tamil script) but makes subdivisions based on the pronunciation. As an example, the words starting with க, when it is pronounced like (Portuguese) G are found on pages 77 to 80, but the words starting with க, when it is pronounced like Q, which are of course much more numerous, are found on pages 252 to 323. See Chevillard[2017] for more details.

in addition to the transparently ubiquitous “international language” which English has become nowadays. Therefore, it maybe sufficient to acknowledge that:

- this is an entry which deals with a metal (bronze) instrument possibly translatable as “cymbal”, of which a smaller variety, called கைத்தாளம், is used by combining the action of the two hands, as stated in the gloss “huās piquenas, que tangẽ nas maõs dando com hua na outra” (see image 1a and image 1b).
- that this small variety may be what is referred to in the *Tēvāram* citation provided in (3)
- that the word **item** inside (2) is here for separating several meanings of the head word, although it is not clear whether the expression *toada no cantar* should really be given the same translation (“A melody in singing”) as in 1c (cf. supra).



image 1a
கைத்தாளம்



image 1b
கைத்தாளம் (in action)

- (3) குழலோடு, கொக்கரை, கைத்தாளம், மொந்தை, குறள்புதம் முன் பாடத் தான் ஆடு(ம்)மே (*Tēvāram*, 6-4, (7))

4. Compiled knowledge and direct knowledge

Before continuing my exploration, an important point has to be raised, which concerns the problem of reliability. Anyone who has seen a கைத்தாளம் in action (as shown in image 1b, extracted from a photograph taken by me in Dharmapuram many years ago) knows (by direct experience) the meaning of the phrase “que tangẽ nas maõs dando com hua na outra” (taken from 2). However, if someone has never seen the கைத்தாளம் being used and only sees their name, along with image 1a in a book, that person might find it difficult to visualize the reality of that small musical instrument. Elements of knowledge, when they are written, have the capacity to survive those who possessed them but also to become misinterpreted. Therefore, when we examine a vast body of compiled knowledge, as is the case when exploring VTCSP, it is important to be able to trace, at least partly the source of that knowledge. This is why, in the article which I wrote for the first edition of this Paris Tamil Conference (in September 2015), I had included the following statement, which is the English translation of a paragraph taken from the introduction to VTCSP. It says:

- (4) Regarding the purity and dignity of the words (*pureza e alteza de palavras*), I well understand that it would be better to include both high and low, pure and corrupt, in accordance with the usage of the various classes of people, so as thus to meet better the range of the language, with particular indication of words used by humble and rural people, and those current only on the Coast****Editor's Footnote: Coast is the Pearly Fishery Coast, or the South Eastern Coast of South India. Jaffnapatam is Jaffna, Ceylon***}} and in the Kingdom of Jaffanapatam, especially since this vocabulary is intended for the use of priests in that Kingdom and on the Coast. But in as much as to include words current only in those

places would require a few years of residence there, I leave this research for another occasion. Nevertheless, I shall include those I can collect from the *Flos Sanctorum* printed on the Fishery Coast and from the vocabulary of F. Ignaccio Bruno prepared in Jaffanapatam, and finally those which are current in this Kingdom of Madura among the lower classes, as far as I have been able to collect them. I shall leave out also poetic words (of which the vocabulary of Fr. Ignacio Bruno is full) because they are useless for practical purposes or for prose, and the Tamil poets have their own vocabularies for them, in which those who are interested and might wish to compose verses may find them.

(Proença, translated by Edgar C. Knowlton, Jr. & Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, 1966, pp. 12-13)

This element of information should (at least partly) clarify the origin of the elements of musical knowledge contained in VTCSP which are the focus of this paper. This being said, I shall now return to my main goal, namely making an inventory of the musical nuggets.

5. Fragment of an inventory (more instruments)

As already said, VTCSP contains (as far as I know today) 16209 entries. I am currently in the process of creating an XML database which will ultimately contain, in a structured manner, thanks to the use of precise TAGGING, the totality of the information found in VTCSP. I am however far from having completed this work because I have so far only entered the text of the Tamil **head-words** for 4621 entries (which is 28.5% of the total) along with the Portuguese text found in half of those entries. Because of the frequent difficulty in deciphering, my text entering is not linear (from beginning to end) but is performed in a partly **random manner**. What I mean to say is that I have created at the beginning an empty XML skeleton (based on a DTD) in which all the 508 pages and 16209 entries virtually exist and that whenever a page seems easily readable (and is not printed in a manner which is challenging for my eyes), I enter that page. Formulated differently, I have inside my XML file 143 completely entered half-pages (i.e. Left or Right columns), **randomly**⁸ taken from all parts of the book, 528 incompletely entered columns, and 345 completely untouched columns. I am saying all this in order to emphasize that whatever will be seen in the charts contained in this section is of course **incomplete**. This being a first attempt at a classification, the chart which follows (Chart 1) groups the items identified so far by categories.

Categories	VTCSP Items
Wind instruments	ஆ ய க கு ழ ல. (47_L_f), எ க க # {ளை} ⁹ (73_L_d), க # ழ க க # ற ன (280_L_j), க # ழ ம (280_L_i), க # ழ ம (280_L_k), க # ள ம (280_L_e), கு ழ ல (310_L_h), ந பி ரி (149_R_a), ந வ ரி (155_R_s), பூ ரி கை (251_R_b).
Drums	உ டு க கு (399_L_e), ப றை (202_L_n), ப றை யி டு கி ற து (202_L_r), ம த த ள ம (122_R_b).

⁸ I must concede that the use of “randomly” is somehow inappropriate because when hesitating between entering the text of several pages, I always give the preference to those pages where I have noticed the presence of a musical term. The sample is therefore biased, but the bias will vanish once the text entering is completed.

⁹ The function of the braces ‘{’ and ‘}’ around {ளை} is to remind the reader that we have here a single glyph (as was the case until the MGR script reform). The same remark applies to {ணா}, etc. and to the ligature {ஸ்த} which appears in the item discussed in section 6 (see Figure 7).

String instruments	கி ண {ணா} # ம (292_R_d), கி ன ன # ம (292_L_r), கி ன ன ரி (292_L_t), சு # ம ண ட ல ம (501_L_r), த ந தி ரி (342_R_a), த ம பு ரு (342_L_h), த ம பூ ரு (342_L_i), # # வ {ணா} {ஸ்த} ம (326_L_b), வீ {ணை} (449_L_m).
Other instruments	கி ண கி ணி (292_R_c), செ க ண டி (476_L_e), த # ள ம (351_L_i), ம ணி (115_L_e).
Singing	க # ன ம (281_L_f), கீ த ம (79_R_i), கு ற ம (315_L_m), த # ல # ட டு (351_L_d), த # ல # ட டு கி ற து (351_L_e), ப ல ல வ ம (190_L_n), ப # ட க ன (213_R_f), ப # ட ட # னி (214_L_f), ப # ட டு (214_L_j), ப # ட ல (213_R_g), ப # டு வ # ன (214_L_p).
Music combined with dance	ப # த ம (196_R_b).
General terms	அ ம @ ¹⁰ # # சை (14_L_a), ஆ @ # # க ன ம (52_L_j), ஆ @ # # சை (52_L_l), ஆ ல # ப ன ம (48_L_a), ஆ ள # ப ம (48_L_q), ஆ ன ந த க க னி ப பு (49_L_n), க # ம பெ # தி (280_L_o), ச ப த சு # ம (450_R_c), ச # ரி த ம (473_L_n), சு தி க கூ ட டு கி ற து (497_R_a), # # க ம (325_L_o), வ # த தி ய ம (423_R_a).

Chart 1: (incomplete)
inventory of the musical vocabulary inside VTCSP

I do not include in this chart the Portuguese explanations, for reasons which should be clear. We shall however now examine, in Section 6, one the items which appears in the String instruments row, namely '# # வ {ணா} {ஸ்த} ம'¹¹, which is entry 326_L_b.

6. The case of the “Ravanastron” (and a தேவாரம் *excursus*)

As in section 3, I shall start by providing images of the corresponding entry, both in the book printed in 1679 (see Figure 7) and in the MS preserved in Goa (see Figure 8). I shall also give a transcription of entry 326_L_b, as well as a transcription of the preceding entry, namely 326_L_a (see Figure 7).

¹⁰ I introduce here a special notation for the கொம்பு, namely '@', in order to preserve my respect of the ambiguity in the 17th century writing system. The item « அ ம @ # # சை » would be written in the modern (unambiguous) spelling as « அமரோசை ».

¹¹ Concerning the symbol '#', see my remarks in section 3. The sequence '# #' corresponds here to 'ரா'. The head of entry 326Lb would nowadays be printed as 'ராவணாஸ்தம்'.

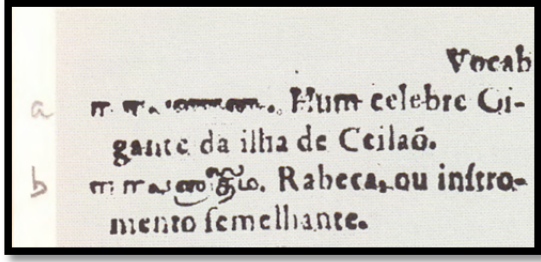


Figure 7
Entry 326_L_b (in VTCSP)
ராவணாஸ்தம்

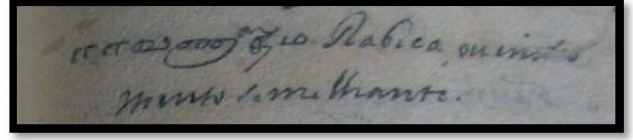


Figure 8
Goa MS equivalent of Figure 7

- (5a) # # வ ண ன. Hum celebre Gi- // gante da ilha de Ceilaõ. [Entry 326La] “A famous giant, from the Island of Ceylon”.
- (5b) # # வ {ணா} {ஸ்த} ம. Rabeca, ou infro- // mento femelhante. [Entry 326La]. “A rebec, or a similar musical instrument”

We are now entering a zone where the type of knowledge which is transmitted by this entry depends very much on the background of the reader, or on the references to which that reader has access. Although the 17th century users probably knew what a “rebec” (respectively “rabeca”) was, this is probably not true of most 21st century English (respectively Portuguese) speakers. As far as Tamil speakers are concerned, if they consult the Madras Tamil Lexicon (henceforth MTL), they will find on page 325 an entry which reads:

- (6) இராவணாத்தம் irāvaṇāttam, n. < id. + prob. hasta. An ancient stringed instrument formed with a coconut shell; ஒருவகைச் சிறு வீணை. (W.)

Additionally, if they consult the தமிழிசைப் பேரகராதி (see Bibliography), they will find on page 73 an entry starting with:

- (7) இராவணாத்தம்: ஒருவகை யாழ்; சிரட்டை கின்னரி.

However, what entries (6) and (7) do not tell us, if of course the musical instrument which they evoke is the same as the instrument referred to in (5b), is the FACT that the rebec possessed a very distinctive component, which can be seen on image 2 (Europe, Medieval period), extracted from a popular online encyclopedia, that distinctive component being a **bow**.



Image 2: Rebec
(with its bow)¹²



Image 3: Ravanastron
(with its bow and coconut shell)¹³

¹² Public domain : <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rebac.jpg>

Therefore, IF the VTCSP was based on direct observation, we can conclude that a bow was apparently also found on the local counterpart of the Rebec, which the VTCSP tried to introduce to its audience, when redacting entry 326Lb. Regarding such questions, the current best reference is a very detailed research article by Joep Bor (“Early Indian Bowed Instruments and the origin of the Bow”), which appeared in 2010¹⁴ (see Bibliography), where he discusses the Rāvanāhasta (also called “ravanastron” by some sources). The present audience will also be interested to know that Joep Bor, trying to find the most ancient attestations for the existence of the bowed “ravanastron”, cites on two occasions (p. 443) the தேவாரம், first mentioning பதிகம் 4-49 (10) (by அப்பர்) and then mentioning பதிகம் 3-28 (by சம்பந்தர்), these being passages referring to the well-known story of Rāvaṇa making use of the sinews of his hand for playing music.

- (8) எடுத்தனன் எழில் கயில்லை இலங்கையர்மன்னன்தன்னை
அடுத்து ஒருவிரலால் ஊன்ற, அலறிப் போய் அவனும் வீழ்ந்து,
விடுத்தனன் கைநரம்பால் வேதகீதங்கள் பாட,
கொடுத்தனர், கொற்றவாள் நாள்;---குறுக்கைவீரட்டனாரே.
[தேவாரம் 4-49 (10)¹⁵]

- (9) கரத்தினால் கயிலையை எடுத்த கார் அரக்கன
சிரத்தினை ஊன்றலும், சிவன்அடி சரண் எனா,
இரத்தினால் கைநரம்பு எடுத்து இசை பாடலும்,
வரத்தினான் மருவு இடம்---மா மழபாடியே
[தேவாரம் 3-28 (8)]

I must however leave the matter rest in the mind of the audience and head towards a conclusion.

¹³ See the continuation of discussion. This image belong to the public domain:

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1219644>

¹⁴ The bibliography in Bor[2010] is quite long but does not contain Proença’s VTCSP.

¹⁵ The key passage is “கைநரம்பால் வேதகீதங்கள் பாட”. I should add to this that Jop Boer seems to think that the word *kayil* (கயில்) is found here, meaning “half a coconut”. IF that is the case; the first words in the first line of the verse (எடுத்தனன் எழில் கயில்லை) would have a DOUBLE MEANING: (1) on the one hand, they would refer to the “lifting of Mount Kailash (கயிலை)”; (2) on the other hand, they would refer to the use of a half-coconut for preparing a ravanastron, in which the strings (நரம்பு) would have been the sinews in his hand (கைநரம்பு). However, there are to this explanation two objections: (A) the meaning “half-coconut” given for கயில்² on page 734 of the MTL is said to be a Jaffna usage (J.) but no ancient attestation is provided; (B) when choosing the second meaning for the beginning of line 1 in Tēvāram 4-49_8, it is difficult to obtain to obtain a connected meaning for the continuation of the stanza. Further investigation is needed.

7. Other Tamil sources for the names of musical instruments

I hope to have shown that it is useful to read ancient sources and to try to make them accessible to a modern audience. There is of course a very large number of sources to explore and only a group of researchers, interacting together, can maintain an active intellectual space where all these sources are not simply the mere NAMES of books standing on a shelf, UNREAD. Among the sources which must also be explore, are those texts to which Proença refers, inside the passage quote in (4), when he says that “Tamil poets have their own vocabularies”. What he refers to there are நிகண்டு texts such as the திவாகரம் and the பிங்கலம் (see bibliography). All those texts contain sections where the various names of many musical instruments are enumerated and it is of course very profitable for lexicographic researchers to know what they contain although, as noted by Proença, they might appear sometimes “useless for practical purposes” until we realize that having a long view of things is frequently important and that uncultivated knowledge can die out. I would also like to remark that in composing யாழ் நூல், VA has made a good use of the நிகண்டு-s, especially when reconstructing the list of 103 பண்-s. However, if we tried now to give even a condensed view of the type of knowledge concerning musical instruments which is found in நிகண்டு-s, we would certainly need an hour and this is therefore not the occasion for that.

8. The wider picture (including the Copenhagen Tamil-Latin dictionary)

Before going into my conclusion, I would like to open another mental thread, in order to reinforce the suggestion, which I have been trying to make repeatedly here today, that the knowledge of several languages is important for a serious study of Tamil sources. I have until now mentionned Portuguese, but there is of course another language which is important for scholarship, namely Latin. In relation with the topic which I have discussed here today, I would like to mention a document which was first mentionned to me four year ago by my colleague P.S. Ramanujan, who has spent a lot of time on Copenhagen, working on the Tranquebar (தரங்கம்பாடி) archives.¹⁶ While he was in Copenhagen, he was kind enough to photograph for me many pages from a Tamil-Latin dictionary which is preserved there. I include here two fragments extracted from that set of images. One of them contains the entry for தாளம் (WITH the sub-entry for கைத்தாளம்), the other one contains the entry for ராவணன் (WITHOUT the accompanying entry for the ராவணாத்தம்).

¹⁶ See the link: <http://www.tharangampadi.dk/index.html>

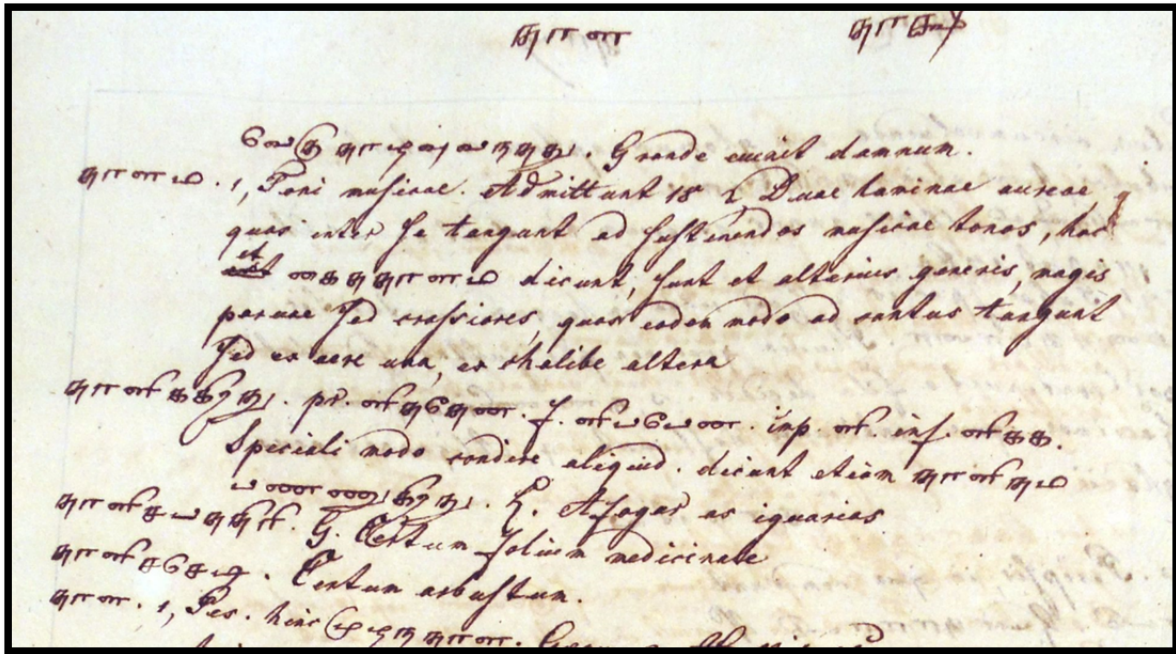


Figure 9: தாளம்
(Copenhagen Tamil-Latin dictionary)

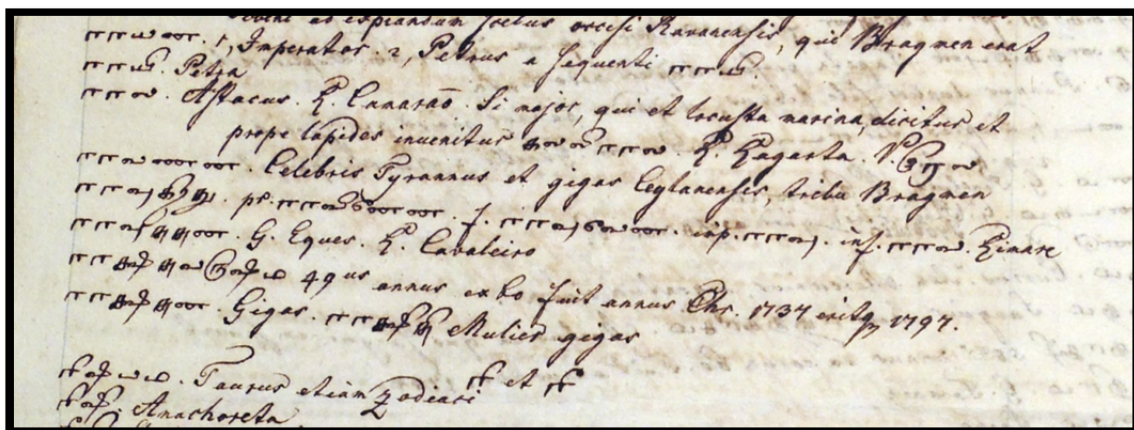


Figure 10: ராஷணன் and other entries
(Copenhagen Tamil-Latin dictionary)

We certainly do not have the time here to try to decipher the Latin, and there are probably not many people in India who are capable of reading Latin. But since we are in France, and since many young Tamilians who live in France DO have the opportunity to study Latin in their Lycées, I would like to emphasize that the Tamil diaspora living in Europe has the potential to master tasks which could have proved impossible in other contexts. I can well imagine that some young person present here today in the audience will some day write a Ph.D. on the Copenhagen Tamil-Latin dictionary and will be capable of benefiting from the advice of the many Latin experts who still exist in France and in other parts of Europe. Latin once was what English is today, namely an international scientific *Lingua Franca*, which every educated person could use, across borders.

9. Conclusion: We live in a time of great possibilities, where collective work is easier than it has ever been.

I have now reached the end of this short guided tour around the components of a work in progress. I initially intended to say a few precisely technical things about what stands below my use of words such as XML, DTD,¹⁷ ... However, I am keenly aware of the fact that it is easy to be “dry” when going into such topics. I belong to a generation which saw the arrival of computers and of the internet, and shall never become “blasé” about what all earlier unimaginable things they allow us to do. Those who were born more recently take them as a quasi-natural part of their lives. Therefore, I shall reserve the technical section for future exchanges with smaller groups. I now wish to express my thanks to my colleague and friend Dr Sachchidanandan for inviting me to this stimulating meeting.

இத்துடன் விடை பெறுகிறேன். நன்றி. வணக்கம்.

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¹⁷ I could also have mentionned XSLT, TEI, ...

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