

Tamil Language for Europeans:  
Ziegenbalg's *Grammatica Damulica*  
(1716)

Translated from Latin and Tamil,  
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With the Assistance of Sister Dr. Rachel Harrington SND

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## Contents

Editorial .....	IX
System of Transliterating Tamil Letters .....	XI
List of Abbreviations .....	XI
Preface .....	XIII
Introduction .....	1
1 Ziegenbalg as a Grammarian .....	5
1.1 Ziegenbalg's Love for Languages .....	5
1.2 Ziegenbalg's Tamil Teachers .....	8
1.3 Ziegenbalg's Earlier Attempts to write a Tamil Grammar .....	11
1.4 Ziegenbalg's Reasons for writing this Tamil Grammar .....	14
1.5 Ziegenbalg's Sources used in this Tamil Grammar .....	15
1.6 Ziegenbalg's Process of writing this Tamil Grammar .....	22
2 [Ziegenbalg's] Tamil Grammar .....	27
[Title] .....	27
[Dedications] .....	28
[Foreword] .....	30
Chapter I on Letters .....	37
Chapter II on the Reading and Pronunciation of this Language .....	45
Chapter III on Nouns .....	51
Chapter IV on Adjectives .....	65
Chapter V on Pronouns .....	77
Chapter VI on Verbs .....	91
Chapter VII on Particles .....	141
Chapter VIII on Syntax .....	151
3 Ziegenbalg's Tamil Grammar and its reception .....	159
3.1 In Europe .....	159
3.2 In India .....	162
Conclusion .....	169
Bibliography .....	171

## Editorial

In diesem Band wird erstmals ein wichtiges Dokument der indischen Christentums- und Kulturgeschichte in englischer Übersetzung der akademischen Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht: die lateinisch-tamilische Grammatik („*Grammatica Damulica*“) von Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719) aus dem Jahr 1716. Ziegenbalgs Tätigkeit als dänisch-hallescher Missionar im südindischen Tranquebar eröffnete nicht nur eine neue Phase der protestantischen Missionsgeschichte in Asien. Er war auch ein Pionier bei der Erforschung südindischer Sprachen und Literatur. Zugleich gab er wesentliche Anstöße zum kulturellen Austausch zwischen Indien und dem frühneuzeitlichen Europa. Die von seinem Werk ausgehenden Impulse sind bis heute im globalen ökumenischen Diskurs deutlich wahrzunehmen.

Zugleich wird mit diesem Band eine neue Reihe eröffnet, die sich die Publikation von Dokumenten zur Geschichte des Christentums in Asien, Afrika, Ozeanien, der Karibik und Lateinamerika zum Ziel gesetzt hat. Im weltkirchlichen Kontext spielt das Christentum dieser Erdteile eine immer wichtigere Rolle. Seine Geschichte lässt sich weniger denn je als bloßer Anhang zur westlichen Missions- und Kirchengeschichte verstehen. In der neuen Reihe sollen darum unterschiedliche Quellen Aufnahme finden und vielfältige Aspekte christlicher Präsenz und Geschichte im „globalen Süden“ dokumentiert werden. Neben missionarischen Quellen sollen insbesondere auch frühe Zeugnisse einheimischer Christen sowie Dokumente aufgenommen werden, die die ganze Bandbreite der Interaktion zwischen christlicher Botschaft und den jeweiligen regionalen Kulturen beleuchten. Zugleich werden transkontinentale Perspektiven dokumentiert. Fachkollegen unterschiedlicher Disziplinen – Christentumshistoriker, Religions- und Missionswissenschaftler, Vertreter der unterschiedlichen Regional- und Kulturwissenschaften sowie Übersee- und Globalhistoriker – sind herzlich zur Kooperation eingeladen.

München, im März 2010  
Für die Herausgeber

*Klaus Koschorke*

## Editorial

In this volume an English translation of an important document about the History of Indian Christianity and Culture is presented for the first time to an academic public: the Latin-Tamil Grammar (“Grammatica Damulica”) published in the year 1716 by Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719). His work in the south Indian city of Tranquebar marked a new phase in the history of Protestant mission in Asia. Likewise he pioneered an innovative way of studying south Indian languages and literature. The consequences of his energetic promotion of cultural exchange between India and Europe during the early modern period and his ecumenical efforts involving members of diverse Christian denominations and nationalities are still strongly felt in global discourses.

Simultaneously, this volume marks the start of a new series that has the goal of publishing documents pertaining to the History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, the Oceania, the Caribbean and Latin America. Christianity in these parts of the world plays within the global scene an increasingly important role. Its history cannot be simply understood as a mere appendix to Euro-American history of mission and church. Therefore this new series will publish original source materials that deal with the history and presence of Christians in the Global South. In addition to documents written by (Euro-American) missionaries, special attention will be paid to early works by indigenous Christians and to materials that will throw light on a wide variety of interactions between Christian faith and regional cultures. Transcontinental perspectives of Christianity will be documented as well. Scholars in different fields of study, especially researchers in history of Christianity, religions, local and global mission and culture studies, and general history are cordially welcome for cooperation.

Munich, March 2010  
For editors

*Klaus Koschorke*

## Preface

It is said that exceptions prove the rule. Ziegenbalg's Latin-Tamil Grammar entitled *Grammatica Damulica* is an exception. It is not the first Tamil Grammar compiled by a European; but it is and remains the first comprehensive Tamil Grammar that was printed in Germany as early as in 1716! In 1991, I had the privilege of researching in the famous Mission Archives of the Francke Foundations in Halle (Saale), Germany. At that time I happened to hold a copy of this grammar in my hands. Its beautiful Tamil fonts, drawn and drafted in Tranquebar, but cut and formed in Halle, astonished me greatly. The colloquial nature of the Tamil words and sentences captured my attention; this grammar compiled from the perspectives of spoken Tamil sought to teach the language of people's heart, and not of literary books. Three years later, in 1994, I visited the British Library in London. Once again I had the privilege of holding a paper manuscript that contained a Portuguese-Tamil Grammar. At that time I did not know anything about the author or its content. After sixteen years I could identify this manuscript as part of *Arte Tamulica* compiled by the Jesuit missionary Balthazar da Costa (1610–1673).

I wanted to translate the entire text of Ziegenbalg's Latin-Tamil Grammar into English. But my knowledge of Latin was not enough to sufficiently unlock Ziegenbalg's intended meanings. I approached several Latinists and requested their help. They looked at the Latin text and stated that they were unable to translate it. At last, in December 2008 Sister Catherine Hughes of the *Sisters of Notre Dame* (SND) in Liverpool graciously introduced me to her colleague Sister Dr. Rachel Harrington SND in London. In spite of her heavy schedule Sister Harrington skilfully translated the complex parts of the Latin text of Ziegenbalg's Latin-Tamil Grammar into English including the long title, dedications, foreword, and several grammatical rules. I am infinitely grateful to Sister Harrington for this unique support.

Secondly, I wish to record my sincere thanks to Professor Knut Usener who teaches Greek and Latin at the *Kirchliche Hochschule* ("Protestant Theological University") in Wuppertal, Germany. In May and June 2009 he spent many evenings in explaining to me certain idioms and phrases found in Ziegenbalg's Latin text.

Thirdly, my special thanks go to Professor Jetro da Silva at the *Berklee College of Music* in Boston, USA for patiently translating the difficult hand-written Portuguese text of the *Arte Tamulica* by Balthazar da Costa. In August 2009 he and his wife Rhonda provided me hospitality in their home in Rhode Island for a week so that I could examine the manuscripts with undivided attention.

Fourthly, I thank my esteemed friends and colleagues in the Francke Foundation in Halle (Saale), Germany for their ready support. In July 2009 they gave me access to all manuscripts dealing with this grammar. Whenever I needed clarifications, Dr. Britta Klosterberg, Mrs Anke Mies, Mrs. Zosel, and others helped me. I value greatly my friendship with Dr. Thomas Müller-Bhalke, the Director of the Francke Foundations for his dynamic

leadership in taking care of the archival and precious materials pertaining to the Royal Danish-Halle Mission.

Fifthly, for intellectual stimulus and encouragement I thank Professors Robert E. Frykenberg in Madison-Wisconsin, Richard Fox Young in Princeton, Arno Sames and Helmut Obst in Halle (Saale), Klaus Koschorke in Munich, Hans-Jürgen Findeis and Annakutty Findeis in Bonn, and Andrew F. Walls in Liverpool.

Sixthly, I am grateful to my colleagues at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies in Liverpool Hope University for welcoming me into their midst. My work as the Professor of World Christianity and as the Director of Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity is rewarding. This Centre has several avenues to connect the academic with the general public and thus to bring the insights and knowledge of World Christianity into the society.

Seventhly, I am particularly thankful to Professor Klaus Koschorke for accepting this work as the first volume of his newly founded series entitled *Documents on the History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America*. His constant efforts to make original documents on Christianity and Christian missions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America available to students and researchers alike have proved to be greatly beneficial. It has been a great pleasure to work with Ms Andrea Stoltz at the Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany. She has willingly and repeatedly helped me with her technical knowledge in formatting this text. I am grateful to her and her team for publishing this book on time.

Eighthly, I wish to record my thanks to Dr. Robinson Thamburaj at Madras Christian College in Tamil Nadu, India, for carefully proof reading the entire manuscript. As an informed Tamil mother tongue speaker and a careful observer he made valuable suggestions to improve the accuracy and style of this English text.

Last, but not least, I express my sincere thanks to my wife the Revd Sheela Jeyaraj for patiently looking after all family-related duties and giving me enough time to work on this book. She and our daughter Ruth understand the demands that my philological research imposes on them. Our daughters Rebecca and Elisabeth assisted me in their own critical way. My family repeatedly brought me from the “world of Ziegenbalg” back to real life situations and supported me to continue my work on several fronts. I thank them for their unconditional love and limitless support.

I have tried to articulate the intended meanings of Ziegenbalg’s Tamil words, sentences, and grammatical paradigms. There might be some areas where I have not been able to fully express the meaning. The reason for this inability lies mainly in my knowledge of English which is in fact my third academic language (after Tamil and German). I am still learning it. Therefore I request the reader’s indulgence in overseeing my linguistic limitations. I gladly welcome any comment.

I remain grateful to my mother Esther Rani Ponniah who suddenly passed away in May 2003. Due to utter poverty she did not have the privilege of formally attending any school. Yet with firm determination she taught herself Tamil alphabets and learned to read and write Tamil texts. As a widow she worked as daily-waged farm labour in the Kodaikanal Hills in Tamil Nadu and delighted to send all her six children to the school in the village of Pallanghi. As she was unable to support them and their studies, she requested the Christian Mission Service (CMS, with its headquarters in Silverdale, Coonoor, the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu) to admit five of her children. Consequently, Mr. Horst Kowski, the Administrator of

the CMS, admitted them into their various Children's Homes and training institutions. The CMS supported my education for fourteen years (1977–1990) and four of my siblings even longer. I record my sincere thanks to Mrs. Sigrid Thomas in Tostedt, Mrs. Ursula Aenis in Binzen and Mrs. Heidi Seiferth in Lingen (Ems) for sponsoring my education and theological training through CMS.

I am grateful to my mother for allowing me to join the CMS. I admire her commitment to achieve something greater than she was. Her farsightedness, her photographic mind, amazing intellectual clarity, and her wise discernment in practical matters still astonish me. When she was alive I mentioned to her my desire to translate this grammar. Had she lived, she would have rejoiced in seeing its publication. With deep affection and gratitude I dedicate this book to her and to her memory.

Daniel Jeyaraj  
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March 2010