

# TAMIL IN WARSAW

Celebrating  
the 40th Anniversary of Tamil Studies  
at the University of Warsaw  
(2012/2013)

edited by

Danuta Stasik and Jacek Woźniak

# Tamil in Warsaw

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**Danuta Stasik and Jacek Woźniak**



Warsaw 2014

Reviewed by Prof. PhDr. Jaroslav Vacek, CSc. (Charles University in Prague)

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## Introduction

In the year 1972, the Yellow River dried up for the first time in known history; the Soviet spacecraft Luna 20 came back to Earth with samples of lunar soil; during the 11th Winter Olympic games in Sapporo – held for the first time in Asia – a Polish ski jumper, Wojciech Fortuna, won Poland's first Olympic gold medal in winter games; Pakistan and India signed the historic Simla Agreement, thus putting an end to the conflict begun by the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971; Apollo 17, after landing on the moon, returned to Earth, concluding the United States' Apollo program, which accomplished landing the first humans on the moon; the constitution of the newly established state of Bangladesh came into effect...

Yearbooks, encyclopaedias, calendars and the like mention many more facts and unprecedented occurrences that took place in 1972 but it is unlikely that one would find among them an explanation as to why 1972 is so special in the history of Indian studies at the University of Warsaw. This may not seem surprising when one considers the birth of Tamil studies in Warsaw from the vantage point of the world stage. Nevertheless, it is also true that in order to know of something, one must either experience it firsthand or have access to relevant knowledge sources about it. This volume, which substantially is an outcome of a commemorative session organized by the Chair of South Asian Studies of the Faculty of Oriental Studies on 16th May 2013 to mark the fortieth anniversary of Tamil studies at the University of Warsaw, is a humble attempt to fill this lacuna, even if, alas, with no great hopes for global recognition of our centre's anniversary...

Let me present *Tamil in Warsaw* not so much in accordance with the arrangement laid out in the table of contents but rather through the lens of an intellectual whole formed by its contributors and other persons who have been part of and built Tamil studies in Warsaw. Thus, with the essays by Jacek Woźniak, 'Tamil Studies in Warsaw' (pp. 11–14), and R. Sundaram, 'My Poland: Some of My Evergreen Memories' (pp. 17–19), the volume introduces us to the history of Tamil in Warsaw, both in a more factual as well as a more personal manner. From them we learn that 1972 was the year when Dr. R. Sundaram joined our university as a lecturer of Dravidian languages. Owing to this, in the academic year 1972/1973, Warsaw



Indology – for the first time in Poland – could offer regular courses in Tamil. Dr. Sundaram’s seven-year presence in Warsaw proved to be a solid foundation for an enduring development in the syllabi of Indian studies at our university. Thanks to the collaboration with the government of India (the Indian Council of Cultural Relations), the Tamil program was continued with the help of other professors who came to Warsaw from India: Dr. R. Parthasarathy, Dr. T.S. Natarajan, Dr. K. Subramoney, Dr. K. Nachimuthu, Dr. P. Doctor Nazeemdeen, Dr. S. Carlos, Dr. D. Murthy, Dr. A. Mariappan, Dr. G. Balasubramanian, Dr. A. Ramasamy and Dr. S. Arokianathan. Over the years, educating new groups of students, all these professors helped Tamil studies in Warsaw to consolidate and mature. I am extremely happy and grateful that to this day, the majority of them are sincerely interested in our doings and responded to the news of the anniversary celebrations, sending not only their congratulatory messages but also valuable contributions published in this volume: Indira Parthasarathy, ‘The Rāma Story as Embellished by Kampan’ (pp. 31–36), A. Ramasamy, ‘The *Puranāṇūru* – Women Poets’ Voices Against War’ (pp. 37–53), G. Balasubramanian, ‘Teaching Spoken and Written Varieties of Tamil to Foreigners: Problems and Perspectives’ (pp. 108–117) and A. Mariappan, ‘(Hi)story of Kaṭṭappommaṇ: Politics of Colonial and Post-Colonial Readings’ (pp. 118–131). In the context of contributions by Indian teachers, one more paper should also be mentioned: ‘Wandering Naked: Śaiva Women Mystics in Search of Spiritual Empowerment’ (pp. 167–187) by Govindaswamy Rajagopal, who came to Poland in 2011 and for two years was a lecturer of Tamil at Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Just before leaving for India, he graced the anniversary session of May 2013 with his presence.

From among the graduates of our department, Polish teachers of Tamil could be recruited and carry on teaching as well as research duties. Among them of special importance have been Tadeusz Herrmann, the late Joanna Kusio and Jacek Woźniak. Hand-in-hand with Indian professors, they helped establish the Warsaw school of Tamil studies, the only centre in Poland offering courses at all levels of higher education (BA, MA, PhD) and, in fact, one of only a few such institutions outside India. Joanna Kusio’s own original research, retrieved after her death from her personal archive and prepared for publication by Jacek Woźniak, ‘*MGR ulā*: A Traditional Tamil Literary Genre Towards Modernity’ (pp. 132–140), as well as his paper ‘What the Mother Said in Tirumaṅkaiyālvār’s *Periya tirumoli*’ (pp. 79–88), serve as a small sample of the research cultivated at our department. Natalia Świdzińska, author of ‘Searching for Memories in Memorial Stones: Recollections of a Polish Researcher in Tamil Nadu’ (pp. 20–28), should be mentioned together with Joanna and Jacek as another graduate of the University of Warsaw active in the field of Tamil studies. Since the 1990s, she has been employed at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań but has always maintained close contact with her *Alma Mater*.



Another significant presence, marked not only during the anniversary session in May 2013 but also in this volume – in the form of the paper ‘*Cilappatikāram: Some Observations on Its Heroine and on the Poem’s Structure*’ (pp. 54–71) – is that of Prof. Alexander M. Dubyanskiy of Moscow State University. Professor Dubyanskiy, one of the most important figures in the field, participated in all procedures for doctoral degrees based on theses dealing with Tamil held at our university. There is no exaggeration in saying that it would be impossible to imagine Tamil in Warsaw without Professor Dubyanskiy’s expertise in the field of Dravidology so generously shared with us and without his extraordinary kindness in his contact with Warsaw over so many years.

The present volume also proves that scholars from Warsaw engaged in other subjects have ventured into the field of Dravidology and South India, yielding interesting pieces of scholarship, best exemplified by the papers ‘Kumārila’s Knowledge of Dravidian Languages’ by Monika Nowakowska (pp. 91–107) and ‘The *Rāmāyaṇa* in the Dark: *Tōlpāvakūttū* Theatre of Kerala’ by Bożena Śliwaczyńska (pp. 143–154).

In celebrating anniversaries, especially institutional ones, we usually not only look back, pondering upon the past, and dwell on the present. On such occasions, it seems even more important and logical to look ahead, considering the immediate and more distant future of our doings. The contents of this volume suggest that the Tamil academic space in Warsaw, after the retirement of Tadeusz Herrmann and the untimely death of Joanna Kusio, although still lacking a mature Tamil specialist, is slowly making up for these losses not only thanks to the more and more experienced Jacek Woźniak but also thanks to a group of young enthusiasts – our PhD students. Their papers, ‘The Image of Pēy in *Kalīnkattup paraṇi*’ by Joanna Drożak-Chojnacka (pp. 72–78), ‘A Few Notes on Śakti Goddesses in Tamil Folklore’ by Karolina Łaszewska (pp. 187–198) and ‘Great Tamils: The Tiruvārūr Trinity and the Beginning of a New Era in Carnatic Music’ by Natalia Żakowska (pp. 155–163), seem to be a good omen for the future of Tamil studies in Warsaw, and more generally, of Dravidology.

Some people jokingly say that the first forty years of childhood are always the hardest. Let us hope that the decade to follow will be much easier and even more productive, abounding in high quality work. Looking forward to it, I have already started the countdown for the Golden Jubilee of Tamil studies in Warsaw...

Prof. Danuta Stasik, Head,  
Chair of South Asian Studies,  
Faculty of Oriental Studies,  
University of Warsaw



**Jacek Woźniak**

(University of Warsaw, Poland)

## Tamil Studies in Warsaw

Tamil Studies as a new Indological discipline were introduced at the University of Warsaw in the 1970s. This was possible mainly due to the efforts of Prof. Eugeniusz Słuszkiewicz and Prof. M. Krzysztof Byrski. The beginnings of Tamil Studies are related to the figure of Dr. Ramanathan Sundaram (b. 1938), the first Tamil teacher in Poland, who came to Warsaw on 15 April 1972 and started working at the University in October 1972 as a lecturer of Dravidian languages. The efforts to employ a lecturer of Dravidian languages (Tamil and Malayalam) were initiated in 1968 (in the University archives, there is a letter to the Ministry of Education dated 30 September 1968). In a letter to the Ministry of Education dated 11 December 1969, the Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Prof. Janusz Chmielewski, emphasized that the Section of Indian Philology had been conducting extra-curricular Tamil and Malayalam classes run on a self-educational basis, i.e. without a teacher. This means that a serious interest in Tamil and Malayalam was expressed at the University of Warsaw at the end of the 1960s. There is proof of this in the form of the first MA thesis on the Tamil language, submitted by Ms. Małgorzata Burakowska in 1970, two years before the arrival of Dr. Sundaram. Her MA thesis, entitled *Phonetic and Phonological Adaptation of Loanwords from Sanskrit in Old Tamil (and its consequences)*, was prepared under the guidance of Prof. E. Słuszkiewicz. Since then, forty-seven more students (in total forty-eight) have graduated from the Department after submitting MA dissertations dealing with various aspects of Tamil linguistics, literature and culture.

It should be kept in mind that Dr. R. Sundaram was employed in the Department as a lecturer of Dravidian languages, *viz.*, Tamil and Malayalam. It is important to note that the study of Malayalam was very much present in the curricula of the University of Warsaw until 2006, when the last course in Malayalam (hopefully not the last as such) was offered. Three Visiting Professors of Tamil, who came to Warsaw after Dr. Sundaram, were from the University of Kerala and also taught Malayalam. Malayalam classes were conducted by

Dr. T. Herrmann, a graduate of the Department, as well. It is interesting to note that, for example, in the academic year 1976/1977, the number of Tamil and Malayalam classes for the students of the third year was the same – six hours per week for each language (plus four additional hours of Tamil text readings).

Dr. R. Sundaram stayed in Warsaw for seven years. In the beginning, for two years after his arrival, Tamil was taught as an optional second language to the students of Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit. In 1974, the first regular group with Tamil as the major subject was recruited, and the major has been continued up to today. Under the guidance of Dr. R. Sundaram, six students prepared their MA theses on different issues related to the Tamil language and literature. He is also the author of the first and only Tamil textbook (with reading exercises) prepared for the Polish students (published in 1975). The first Indology student who prepared an MA thesis under the guidance of Dr. R. Sundaram in 1975 was Mrs. Katarzyna Witkowska-Trzaska, a student of Hindi, who learnt Tamil during the final three years of her studies. She was the first Polish teacher of Tamil – after her graduation, she conducted classes on Tamil language and literature for a couple of years at the University of Warsaw.

Since the times of Dr. R. Sundaram, thanks to the collaboration with the government of India, the following eleven Tamil teachers from India joined the Department's teaching staff as visiting professors:

- Dr. R. Parthasarathy (b. 1930), better known by his pen-name Indira Parthasarathy, an eminent Tamil novelist and playwright (1981–1986);
- Dr. T.S. Natarajan from Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai (1986–1990);
- Dr. K. Subramoney from the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram (1990–1995);
- Dr. K. Nachimuthu from the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram (1995–1998);
- Dr. P. Doctor Nazeemdeen from the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram (1998–2001);
- Dr. S. Carlos from Bangalore University (2001–2005), a scholar and a writer under the pen-name Tamilavan, who also conducted an introductory one-year course in the Kannada language;
- Dr. D. Murthy from Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (2005–2007);
- Dr. A. Mariappan from the University of Delhi (2007–2009);
- Dr. G. Balasubramanian from Dravidian University, Kuppam (2009–2011);
- Dr. A. Ramasamy from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli (2011–2013);
- Dr. S. Arokianathan from Pondicherry University (2014).

So far, three graduates of the Department of South Asian Studies at the University of Warsaw have been granted a PhD degree in the field of Tamil Studies. The first was Tadeusz Herrmann, the student of Dr. R. Sundaram, who was conferred the PhD degree in 1989 on the basis of his thesis *The Doctrine of Śaivasiddhānta Philosophy in Tiruvācakam by Māṇikkavācakar*. It was written under the supervision of Prof. M. Krzysztof Byrski and reviewed by Prof. Kamil V. Zvelebil of Utrecht University as well as by Prof. Alexander M. Dubyanskiy of Moscow State University. Dr. T. Herrmann taught Tamil and Malayalam until 2006, when he retired. His main interests were the philosophy of Śaivasiddhānta and Tamil Śaiva Bhakti literature.

The second was the late Joanna Kusio (1960–2009) who received her PhD degree in 2003 on the basis of the dissertation entitled *The Figure of Kuṟatti – a Female Fortune-teller in Tamil Tradition. An Analysis of Tamil Literary and Oral Sources*, written under the guidance of Prof. M. Krzysztof Byrski and reviewed by Prof. Alexander M. Dubyanskiy of Moscow State University and Prof. Łukasz Trzcziński of Jagiellonian University. Dr. J. Kusio's main field of interest was medieval Tamil literature, especially the genre of *kuṟavañci*, South Indian folklore and the cult of goddesses.

Jacek Woźniak defended his PhD thesis in 2005. The thesis, entitled *Tradition and Modernity in Jayakanthan's Short Stories*, was written under the supervision of Prof. Danuta Stasik and reviewed by Prof. Alexander M. Dubyanskiy of Moscow State University as well as Prof. M. Krzysztof Byrski of Warsaw University. Since 2000, Dr. J. Woźniak has been teaching Tamil grammar and literature.

The name of Prof. Alexander M. Dubyanskiy of Moscow State University should be strongly emphasized here as he has been actively participating in promoting all Polish PhD holders in Tamil.

Natalia Świdzińska is one more graduate of the Department of South Asian Studies of the University of Warsaw who is actively engaged in the field of Tamil Studies in Poland. She teaches Tamil at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

At present, three students are continuing their post-graduate studies in Tamil and are preparing their PhD dissertations. Joanna Drożak-Chojnacka is mainly interested in Dravidian demonology, Karolina Łaszewska is working on the cult of the goddess Māriyamman, and Natalia Żakowska studies South Indian musical and dance tradition.

As has already been mentioned, Tamil Studies at the University of Warsaw owe a great deal to the government of India, and in particular to the Indian Council of Cultural Relations and the Indian Embassy in Warsaw. Without the native speakers engaged as Visiting Professors for the last 40 years, the teaching of Tamil would not be possible in Warsaw. India supports Tamil Studies at the

University of Warsaw not only by appointing native speaking teachers, but also by offering scholarships to our students and graduates. All Polish teachers of Tamil as well as a few students were granted long-term scholarships to India under the Indo-Polish Cultural Exchange Programme. Thanks to this, Polish students had a chance to learn Tamil in the native language environment, at different universities in Tamil Nadu – at the University of Madras in Chennai, Tamil University in Thanjavur, Madurai Kamarajar University in Madurai, Annamalai University in Chidambaram and Puducherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture in Puducherry (affiliated to Tamil University in Thanjavur). The role of Tamil University in Thanjavur is especially important in this context, since all of the present Tamil scholars at the University of Warsaw had a chance to study either directly there or in the Institute affiliated to it.

### Further Reading

- Kusio, Joanna, 'Studia drawidyjskie', in Maciej Popko (ed.), *75 lat Instytutu Orientalistycznego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007, pp. 141–146.
- Kusio, Joanna, 'Tamil Studies in Poland', in Danuta Stasik and Anna Trynkowska (eds), *Teaching on India in Central and Eastern Europe. Contributions to the 1st Central and Eastern European Indological Conference on Regional Cooperation (Warsaw, 15–17 September 2005)*, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2007, pp. 109–114.
- Woźniak, Jacek, 'Tamilski w Warszawie. Z okazji obchodów 40. rocznicy tamilistyki w Uniwersytecie Warszawskim', *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, vol. 3–4 (247–248), 2013, pp. 125–138.

1.

MEMORIES FROM POLAND  
AND TAMIL NADU





**R.M. Sundaram**

## My Poland: Some of My Evergreen Memories

I like and love Poland, my second motherland. I came to Poland on 20 April 1972 to begin Tamil studies in the Department of Indology, University of Warsaw. I have to thank with respect Prof. Dr. M. Krzysztof Byrski, former head of Indology, who did all his best to introduce Tamil and Dravidian Studies. I carried on my academic work there, begun on 4 October 1972, successfully for seven years (1972–1979). I had a very peaceful and happy life there with the help of my students, their family members and my friends. I spent enough time in the country to learn Polish, which helped me to have good interactions with my students.

The students were very much interested in listening to Tamil poems and discussing them. Once, when I explained the compound word *kayal kaṇṇāy* ('fish-like eyes'; *Kāṇalvari*, *Cilappatikāram*), a student laughed loudly. I got angry and asked her 'Why are you laughing?' She became quiet but after a few minutes said, 'Comparing eyes with fish is funny in our culture. We compare eyes with stars. Excuse me for irritating you.' I excused her and told her that in Tamil there is also an idiom *muṭṭaikkaṇṇan* ('egg-like-eyes') comparable with your 'fish-like eyes' ('oczy jak ryba / rybie oczy'). This discussion prompted me to write the article 'Kayal kaṇṇāy'.

Another evergreen memory of my life in Poland is related to my tour to Denmark, Sweden and Norway with the family of a friend working in the Malaysian Embassy. Since we planned to travel by car, we carried three cans of petrol. At the check-post, a security officer asked us the details of the luggage we carried and I answered in Polish. He directed us to meet the chief officer. He also came with us and told the chief about my involvement in the Polish translation of the *Tirukkuraḷ*, which he read chapter wise and explained the content of some couplets. The chief officer congratulated me and requested that I send him a copy of the book. He permitted us to keep the petrol and informed us that we can bring anything except pornographic literature and magazines when we return.

We thanked him wholeheartedly and continued our tour with pleasure. I wrote an article ‘Vaḷḷuvar tanta petrol’ (*Petrol given by Vaḷḷuvar*)<sup>1</sup> based on this event.

Here I have to mention the translation of the *Tirukkuraḷ* done by Bohdan Gębarski.<sup>2</sup> He read the *Tirukkuraḷ* through the English translation of V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar.<sup>3</sup> I came to know about his work and contacted him through a friend. We had many discussions and I helped him improve the translation. I read some portions of the translation to my students, who assisted me in making some corrections. Bohdan Gębarski was kind enough to accept the corrections and acknowledge my cooperation.

When I had enough time, I participated in the functions arranged by my students and friends and also in the programs of the Indo-Polish Friendship Society, in which I delivered some lectures. I travelled to Kraków, Poznań, Łódź and other cities. My friends requested that I write articles on the Tamil language and literature. Accepting their request, I wrote some articles and published them in the journals.

I have to mention again that my life in Poland was very enjoyable and profitable. My knowledge of Polish helped me interact with my neighbours cordially and understand the Polish culture in all its aspects. I am very proud now to know that the Department is celebrating the completion of 40 years of Tamil Studies, which I started in 1972, and hope that I will participate in its golden jubilee function. I wish the faculty members and the students a good academic career.

### Works published during my stay in Poland

Sundaram, R.M., ‘Learning Tamil: Some Problems’, *Acta Philologica*, no. 7, 1978.

Sundaram, R.M., ‘Nieśmiertelne dzieło Walluwara’ (tr. Piotr Drozdowski), *Poezja*, no. 10 (107), 1974, pp. 70–73.

Sundaram, Ramanathan, ‘Pāvaipāttu’, *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, vol. 21, no. 1 (40), (Materiały do „Słownika rodzajów literackich”), 1978, p. 124.

Sundaram, R., ‘Kamil Zvelebil, A Sketch of Comparative Dravidian Morphology. Part One’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1981, pp. 112–116 (a review).

Sundaram, R.M., ‘Uwagi o literaturze tamilskiej’ (tr. Marta Jakimowicz), *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, no. 1 (89), 1974, pp. 58–62.

<sup>1</sup> (Tiru)Vaḷḷuvar (c. 4th/5th century?) – an ancient Tamil poet, the author of the *Tirukkuraḷ*, a famous work on ethics, polity and love.

<sup>2</sup> Tiruwalluvar, *Święta księga południowych Indii*, tr. Bohdan Gębarski, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1977 (2nd edition – Wrocław: Europa, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Tirukkuraḷ of Tiruvaḷḷuvar*, in Roman transliteration, with English translation, Madras: The Adyar Library, 1949.

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Sundaram, Ramanathan, 'Varipāttu', *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, vol. 19, no. 1 (36), (Materiały do „Słownika rodzajów literackich”), 1976, p. 117.

Sundaram, Ramanathan, *Wybór tekstów tamilskich i słownik (dla studentów)*, Warszawa: Zakład Filologii Indyjskiej, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1975.

**Natalia Świdzińska**

(Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)

## Searching for Memories in Memorial Stones: Recollections of a Polish Researcher in Tamil Nadu

*In memory of my dear friend Asha – whose kal, or memorial stone,  
must have emerged somewhere in Tamil Nadu*

It was my birthday, 3 March 1989. My classmate, the late Dr. Joanna Kusio,<sup>1</sup> better known in India and Poland by her nickname ‘Asha’ (Asia), honoured the occasion by composing a humorous couplet that can be roughly translated into English as: ‘*vīrakkals* should grow, wherever you will go.’<sup>2</sup> Asha and I had applied for the ICCR scholarship to continue our research projects in Tamil Nadu. My project was on memorial stones. Two years later, Asha and I ended up as field research collaborators in South India.

In fact, not all memorial stones in South India could be classified as *vīrakkals*, or ‘hero stones’ devoted to fallen warriors. There are also memorial stones dedicated to other members of local communities, such as women who committed ritual suicide, crime victims, people who died prematurely or from unnatural causes, and renowned local ascetics.<sup>3</sup>

Research on this subject requires a multidisciplinary approach including disciplines and methodologies as diverse as Tamil literature, folklore, religious

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<sup>1</sup> Joanna Kusio (1960–2009) – received her PhD degree from the University of Warsaw in 2003; she was mainly interested in medieval Tamil literature, especially the genre of *kuṛavañci*, South Indian folklore and the cult of Tamil Hindu goddesses. For more details see: Natalia Świdzińska, ‘In Memoriam Joanna Kusio’, *Pandanus*, vol. 10, 2010, pp. 7–11. Polish version: ‘Wspomnienie: Joanna Kusio (1960–2009)’, *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, no. 3–4, 2010, pp. 233–235.

<sup>2</sup> In Polish: ‘Aby na Twej drodze stale, wyrastały wirakkale’; *vīrakkal* – ‘hero stone’.

<sup>3</sup> For more details see: Natalia Świdzińska, ‘Some Remarks on Memorial Stones Tradition in Tamil Nadu’, *Cracow Indological Studies*, vol. 4/5, 2004, pp. 577–586.

studies, anthropology, archaeology and Dravidian epigraphy. It also involves gathering information from various oral and inscriptional sources.

When I came to Tamil Nadu to study memorial stones, I knew very little about fieldwork and anthropological methodologies. I was a graduate of the newly established Tamil studies program at the University of Warsaw in Poland, where the entire field of South Asian studies was almost exclusively dedicated to the study of literature and linguistics. Consequently, my MA thesis on the archetype of sacred space in Tamil culture was focused on the *sthalapurānas*<sup>4</sup> and based on data gathered from literary sources. After graduation, I wanted to continue my research on the concept of ‘sacred space,’ but I decided not to limit myself to textual sources. In this respect, I am greatly indebted to the eminent Tamil scholar, the late Professor Kamil Zvelebil, whom I met during my visit to the Netherlands. His advice was to focus my research on memorial stone traditions of South India.

The Polish students of Tamil studies were fortunate to work with inspiring scholars from the inception of the program. At that time, Professor M. Krzysztof Byrski, the renowned Polish specialist on Indian drama, was the head of Indology at the University of Warsaw. During his long stay in India, Professor Byrski became fascinated with the tradition of Sanskrit theatre as preserved in South India. And this reaffirmed his strong belief that the inclusion of the study of Dravidian languages and South Indian culture was essential for a comprehensive study of Indian civilization.

The first teacher of the Tamil language at the University of Warsaw was Dr. Ramanathan Sundaram,<sup>5</sup> a well-known linguist from Annamalai University in Chidambaram. Dr. Sundaram lectured in Poland between 1972 and 1979 and was my teacher for a year. He was succeeded by a distinguished Tamil scholar, Dr. Ramanathan Parthasarathy, an expert on Tamil Vaishnavism.<sup>6</sup> Honoured with the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his literary work published under the pen-name of Indira Parthasarathy, Dr. Parthasarathy is also a well-known novelist and playwright. The Government of India conferred on him the distinguished Padma Shri Award in 2009.

The rhyming couplet that Asha composed for my birthday in 1989 became a reality two years later when I went to Tamil Nadu to study memorial stones.

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<sup>4</sup> *Sthalapurāna* (Tamil *talapurānam*) – ‘Old [Stories] on [origin and mythical history] of [sacred] places’; a genre associated with temples and pilgrimage sites, embodying an enormous corpus of myths in Tamil Nadu. Cf. David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> For more see pp. 11–14 and 17–19 in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> For more see pp. 11–14 and 31–36 in this volume.

*Dalsza część książki dostępna w wersji  
pełnej.*

