

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TAMIL TEXT ON 'CHRISTIAN MORALS' FROM TRANQUEBAR¹

BY

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Introduction

This is an edition of a palm-leaf manuscript deposited in the State Archives, Copenhagen with which the chief archivist, Mr. C. Rise Hansen, entrusted me while I was examining the documents in Tamil that I had been asked to check.

Description of the manuscript

The manuscript contains at present only thirteen leaves, of which the first and the reverse of the last are empty. On the second leaf is written the title in German: "Ein klein Schulbüchlein christlicher Moralien". The size of the leaves is about 6 inches × 1 inch. They were evidently once numbered 1-13. The extant leaves are only seven, having the following numbers: 3,6,7,9,11,12, and 13. All the leaves except no. 13 are inscribed on both sides, 5 lines in each side. The thirteenth leaf is the last page, as no moral but a concluding stanza is given. It is apparent that six leaves, 1,2,4,5,8, and 10 have been lost from the original bulk. In the manuscript available there are sixty morals, otherwise there would be 120.

Contents

Although the manuscript is entitled 'Christian Morals', the maxims are very general and acceptable to everybody irrespective of caste, religion and race.

¹ The manuscript is at present exhibited in the museum section of the State Archives (Rigsarkivet).

Author

In the manuscript there is no mention of the name of its author, but from the title he may be presumed to have been a German missionary, probably a teacher at a local school attached to the church. In all probability the manuscript is from the 18th century, the period of the Danish government in Tranquebar. The Danish government employed German missionaries in the church activities during the period of Danish sovereignty in Tranquebar.²

Style

The style of the language is colloquial and simple. The treatise was obviously intended for school children and illiterate people. Various types of colloquialism are found,³ for instance: the words *yurruppaaru* 'to look deeply', *yeṭuttu* 'having taken', *yeḷimai* 'simple', *yoḷukkam* '(good) conduct' begin with an on-glide (y) which does not appear in the standard dialect; the words *otavi*, *kututtu*, show phonemic changes; the words *aḷiñcu* 'having destroyed' and *ninaiccu* 'having thought' are palatalized for *aḷintu* and *niṇaittu*; the words *maṇacu* (for *maṇam*) 'mind', *paṇṇu* (*paṇ*) 'to do' *paaru* (*paar*) 'to see' have extra elements, which is a colloquial feature; the words *eṇṇikkoo* 'you think', *naṭantukoo* 'behave you', *niṇaiccukoo* 'consider you' have colloquial endings for -koḷ; the word *poṇa* 'which goes', shows a contraction for *pookiṇa*.

Presentation

The morals of the manuscript have been numbered serially here. The text is given in Roman transliteration leaf by leaf. A translation of the text is given on the facing pages. Under each leaf is given a list of words found in the text with the probable standard variety of that form.

² Cf. *Der Königl. Dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien eingesandter ausführlichen Berichte, Erster (etc.) Teil*, Halle 1718ff.

³ Cf. also the glosses to the text.

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"If you think (of all the said morals) and do good (according to them) until your death, the graceful God will be your support and save you."

Roman transliteration:

kiṛistava naṛpootanaikaḷ

Cuvati 3

1. kavaṭuḷḷavaṇaayiraatee
2. veḷiyaaṅkaṇaayiru
3. vaṛamuḷḷavaṇaayiraatee
4. ciṇcekamuḷḷavaṇaayiru
5. uḷppakaiyaayiraatee
6. camaataaṇamaayiru
7. aarṛumattaic caakappaṇṇaatee
8. aarṛumattaip piḷaikkappaṇṇu
9. puttiyaik kalaṅkappaṇṇaatee
10. puttiyait teḷivaayirukkappaṇṇu

3. vaṛam – maṛam
5. uḷppakai – uṭṭakai
7. aarṛumam – aatmaa

Cuvati 6:

11. paralookattukkaṭutta kaariyaṅkaḷait teeṭu
12. puulookattukkaṭutta kaariyaṅkaḷilee maṇacu vaiyyaatee
13. aḷiṅcupooṛa vaṣṭtukkaḷai nampaatee
14. aḷiyaata vaṣṭtukkaḷai nampikkaiyooṭe virumpu
15. caṛuveecuraṇ uṇṭaakkiṇa vaṣṭtukkaḷai nintiyaatee
16. atukaḷaip puttik kuurmaiyiṇaalee yurṛuppaaru
17. paṅcayintiriyaṅkaḷai uḷḷaṭakku
18. ṇaṇṇattooṭe kuuṭiṇa kaariyaṅkaḷukku maattiram yeṭuttup
pirappaṭu
19. paava kaariyaṅkaḷukkuk kaṅkoṭatee
20. kaṇṇappaṭukira vaṣṭtukkaḷaip puttiyiṇaalee paaru

12. vaiyyaatee – vaiyaatee
13. vaṣṭtu – vastu
15. caṛuveecuraṇ – carveecuraṇ
18. pirappaṭu – purappaṭu

Translation of the text:

Leaf 3:

1. Do not be cunning
2. Be open-hearted
3. Do not be quarrelsome
4. Be friendly
5. Do not be grudgeful
6. Be reconciled
7. Do not make the conscience die
8. Make the conscience live
9. Do not confuse the intellect
10. Keep the intellect bright

Leaf 6:

11. Search for deeds leading to the heavenly world
12. Do not place your mind on deeds connected with this world
13. Do not believe in the perishable things
14. With a belief in imperishable things, long for them
15. Do not deride the creation of the Lord of All
16. Look at those (heavenly) things with sharpness of intellect
17. Restrain the five senses
18. Start by holding up (the senses) only for matters associated with wisdom
19. Do not give your eyes to sinful matters
20. Look with discernment at the things which are being seen

Cuvati 7:

21. aakaata peeccukkuc cevikoṭaatee
22. piraiyoocanamulla vaattaikaḷaip piraakkillaamal keel
23. kurram varappaṇṇukira peccaip peecaatee
24. ṇaayattukku ottirukkira peccaip peecu
25. atantai vaattaiyaic collaatee
26. taṭciyulla vaattaikaḷaic col
27. paṭa paṭeṇru peecaatee
28. puttimaṇṇaay iruntu metteṇavaay peecu
29. koopamaṇṇa peeccukku mavuṇamaayiru
30. ṇaṇamaṇṇa peeccukku maṇumoḷi collu

22. piraiyoocanam – pirayoocanam
22. vaattai – vaarttai, piraakku – paraakku
25. atantai – akantai
26. taṭci – taṭcci

Cuvati 9:

31. kooyililee pooraṭukku pookkukaḷaic collaatee
32. atileeyiruntu aarumattukkaṭutta kaariyaṇkaḷaic cey
33. caṇuveecuraṇṇaiya caṇṇatiyilee aakaata vicaaraṇkaḷai
niṇaiyaatee
34. avarukku muṇpaaka yoḷukkavaṇakkamuḷlavamaayiru
35. puttiyuḷlavarkaḷukkuc ciicaṇaayiru
36. puttiyillaatavarkaḷukkuk kuruvaayiru
37. yelimaiaṇa peerkaḷukku otaviyaayiru
38. tarittiramulla peerkaḷukku aataravaayiru
39. tukkappaṭukira peerkaḷukkuc cantoosamaayiru
40. tuṇpappaṭukira peerkaḷukku aarutalaayiru

31. pooraṭukku – pookiraṭukku
37. otavi – utavi

Cuvati 11:

41. paavattoṭe kuuṭiyirukkira virṭaikaḷaip paṭiyaatee
42. ṇaayattoṭe kuuṭiyirukkira virṭaikaḷaip paṭikka maṇacaayiru

Leaf 7:

21. Do not give your ears to useless speech
22. Listen to useful words without diversion
23. Do not make speech which causes reproach
24. Make speech which is adjusted to propriety
25. Do not tell proud words
26. Speak humble words
27. Do not speak overhastily
28. Be wise and speak slowly
29. Keep silent in the face of angry speech
30. Reply to wise speech

Leaf 9:

31. Do not make excuses not to go to the temple (church)
32. Being in there do the things leading to self consciousness
33. Do not think useless thoughts in front of the Lord of All

34. Be circumspect and obedient before Him
35. Be a student to wise men
36. Be a teacher to ignorant men
37. Be helpful to the simple people
38. Be of support to the poor people
39. Be of delight to sorrowful people
40. Be of consolation to the suffering people

Leaf 11:

41. Do not read knowledge associated with evil
42. Be prepared to read knowledge associated with good

43. puttikkeetu varuttivikkira paṭippinaiyai kalakkaatee
44. puttikku ṅaṅaṅatteḷivu kuṭukkira paṭippinaiyai kalakka maṅacaayiru
45. maṅacukku paava mayakkam varuttivikkira pottakaṅkaḷai vaaciyaatee
46. maṅacait tiruppuratukku otaviyaayirukkira ṅaṅap pottakaṅkaḷai vaaci
47. caṅuveecuraṅ uṅakkup paṅṅiṅa upakaaraṅkaḷai maṅakkaatee
48. atukaḷai aṅuṅinamum niṅaiccuk kaṅamaay eṅnikkoo
49. tuṅpapaṅkura taṅuvaayilee tayiriyam viṅaatee
50. upattiriyaṅkaḷilee niṅṅu poṅumaiyuḷḷa maṅacaayiru
41. viṅtai – vittai
43. varuttivi – varuttuvi
44. kuṭukkira – koṭukkira
45. pottakaṅkaḷai – puttakaṅkaḷai
46. tiruppuratukku – tiruppukiraṅatukku
48. eṅnikkoo – eṅnikkoḷ
49. tayiriyam – tairiyam
50. upattiriyaṅkaḷ – upattiravaṅkaḷ

Cuvai 12:

51. paralookattiṅuṅaiya varṅamaṅkaḷai vicarikka maṅakkaatee
52. uṅakku varappoora maṅaṅattai yeppootum niṅaiccukkoo
53. picaaciṅuṅaiya tantiraṅkaḷukkuc cammatiyaatee
54. atukaḷaik kiilppaṅuttac caavataṅamaayiru
55. lookattiṅ aatikkattukku uṅaṅpaṅaatee
56. atukaḷait taḷḷi eccarikkaiyaay naṅantukkoo
57. looka paakkiyaṅkaḷait toṅaatee
58. mukivillaata mooṅca paakkiyaṅkaḷai aṅupavikkap piṅaiyaacamaayiru
59. taṅma naṅtakkaiyai viṅaatee
60. tapacu paṅṅak karuttuḷḷavaṅaayiru

43. Do not learn teachings that will bring destruction to understanding of Wisdom
44. Be prepared to learn teachings that will give the clarity to understanding
45. Do not read books which will bring evil confusion to the mind
46. Read books of Wisdom which help to turn your mind (to good)
47. Do not forget the kindnesses done to you by the Lord of All
48. Think of them daily and consider how abundant they are
49. Do not lose courage in the time of crisis when you suffer
50. Keep your mind tolerant when you are in trouble

Leaf 12:

51. Do not forget to understand the heavenly matters
52. Always think of the death that will come to you
53. Do not yield to the practices of the Devil
54. Be careful to subdue them (the practices of the Devil)
55. Do not agree to the domination of worldly matters
56. Reject them and behave cautiously
57. Do not touch the worldly rewards
58. Make efforts to enjoy the endless rewards of bliss
59. Do not give up virtuous conduct
60. Aim strenuously at doing penance

51. vaṛṛamaaṇam – varttamaaṇam
52. varappooṛa maṛaṇattai – varappookiṛa maṛaṇattai
52. yeppootum – eppootum
52. niṇaiccukkoo – niṇaittukkoḷ
55. lookattiṇ – ulakattiṇ
56. naṇantukkoo – naṇantukoḷ
58. mukivillaata – muṭivillaata
58. piṛaiyaacam – piṛayaacam
59. taṇma – tarma

Cuvaṭi 13:

- a. itellaataiyum naṇṇaay niṇaiccu
- b. maṛaṇa pariyaṇtam ceṭṭaayaṇṇaal
- c. tayaaparaṇaṇa caṛuveecuraṇ uṇakku
- d. c cakaayamaayiruntu uṇṇai leṭcippaar

itellaattaiyum – itellaavaṛṛaiyum

naṇṇaay – naṇṇaay

leṭcippaar – raṭcippaar

Leaf 13:

If you think of all this (that has been said) properly and do it until your death, the graceful Lord of All will be of support to you and save you.

