



Book Review

Margherita Trento. (2022). *Writing Tamil Catholicism: Literature, Persuasion and Devotion in the Eighteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill. Pp. xiv+355. ISBN: 978-90-04-51162-0. E-book.

Torsten Tschacher
Heisenberg Fellow,
Department of Modern South Asian Languages and Literatures
South Asia Institute
University of Heidelberg, Germany
Email: torsten.tschacher@sai.uni-heidelberg.de

Why would an Italian Jesuit at a remote mission outpost in South India invest considerable time and resources, mastering the complex literary idiom of ‘classical’ Tamil? How would the composition not only of poetry, but of a traditional grammar in the same idiom aid the project of converting locals to Christianity? With what intention were these texts taught in a school established for that precise purpose, and to whom? In short, how was Catholicism written into the local literary landscape? These are the questions Margherita Trento explores in her book *Writing Tamil Catholicism: Literature, Persuasion and Devotion in the Eighteenth Century*. Trento’s work joins a growing corpus of studies on the history of the Jesuit mission in Madurai and Catholicism in the Tamil country, and especially on the main protagonist of her book, Costanzo Giuseppe Beschi (1680–1747). But her book is much more than a theological discussion of Beschi’s poetry and its role in the mission setting. By discussing the beginnings of Catholic literature in Tamil, Trento moves beyond the discussion of Jesuit *accommodation* to address the question of “how did Tamil people, both local converts and their Hindu friends and neighbours, read and understand Christianity and the mission” (p. 10)?

The book contributes fundamentally to the history of Tamil literature, where literature constitutes a social practice in a particular historical setting. Moreover, Trento places Beschi’s engagements with Tamil poetry squarely within the social context of the Madurai mission as well as in the early-modern Jesuit Republic of Letters. In addressing the *microstoria* of the development of what Trento calls “Tamil Catholicism”, and “what exactly is Tamil about” it (p. 11), her book also fundamentally weaves the local history of the Madurai mission and Tamil Catholic literature into the history of global processes and exchanges.

Besides the introduction and conclusion, the book is divided into six chapters, grouped into three parts of two chapters each. The introduction discusses basic questions related to the “Genealogies of Tamil Catholicism” and the methodology of adopting a micro-history approach, but most importantly, it introduces the history of Catholic textual production in Tamil. This is important because it allows Trento to clarify the notion of ‘literature’ as used in the book. Catholic texts had been produced in Tamil since the late 16th century, aptly referred to by Trento as “writing before accommodation” and the texts connected to “social accommodation” (pp. 21-27). What is special about the corpus of texts associated with Beschi is that the latter explicitly inserted his writing into a discourse on what constituted ‘literature’ (Tamil *ilakkiyam*) in contrast to non-‘literary’ forms of writing. This “literary turn” (p. 27) in the Jesuit mission coincides with the emergence, parallel to Beschi’s project, of Catholic literature written “beyond accommodation” (p. 31) by converts themselves. It is only in the context of this complex genealogy of Catholic writing in Tamil that it becomes possible to appreciate and interrogate the specificity of Beschi’s project. The introduction closes with some notes on the constitution of the archive and an outline of the argument.

As mentioned, Trento proceeds with her analysis of the Catholic “literary turn” in three parts. The first part, “Spiritual Institutions”, introduces readers to the Madurai Mission and its most important actors and institutions. There were two developments in the Madurai Mission that were central to the development of Beschi’s project in the 1720s and 1730s. One was the increased reliance of the Mission on local catechists since at least the second half of the 17th century, a situation that simultaneously created a nucleus of a native Catholic elite, but also at the same time also the need to tie that elite to the interests of the Mission and the Roman Church by providing them with specifically Catholic ways of selfhood. One answer to this dilemma (of relying on catechists and having to offer them means to spiritual and social improvement) constituted the second development: the organization by the Mission of regular retreats for catechists based on the Spiritual Exercises by Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit order. While such retreats for lay people had become common in Europe by the end of the 17th century, the emergence of such retreats for Tamil catechists from 1718 onwards was new, and a discussion of this forms the main subject of the first chapter, “Spiritual Exercises for Tamil Saints”. Trento outlines the role and position of catechists in the mission as an increasingly important group. They were keen to sharpen their social (and caste) standing but had little opportunity to augment their spiritual status as there was no path to their ordination as priests as yet. The chapter highlights the role of one of the lesser-known local Jesuits, Carlo Michele Bertoldi (1662–1740), in organizing the first retreats, in which Beschi played a substantial role as well.

The second chapter continues this discussion by analysing three “Tamil Manuals for Catholic Selves”: the *Ñanamuyarci* or “Spiritual Exercises”, likely written by Bertoldi, as well as two of Beschi’s compositions: the *Vetiyarolukkam* (“Instruction for the Catechists”) and the *Vetavilakkam* (“Explanation of the Revelation”). Both the *Ñanamuyarci* and the *Vetiyarolukkam*, as Trento shows, supplied catechists with ways of fashioning Catholic selves in a Tamil context, with especially Beschi drawing on Tamil ethical literature, most importantly the *Tirukkural*, in addition to the devotional Catholic literature of early-modern Europe. Especially Beschi’s text furthermore attempts to tie catechists, who mostly came from elite landowning non-Brahmin castes, closer to missionaries. In this, the earlier missionary self-fashioning as Brahmin was abandoned in favour of remodelling the relationship between missionaries and catechists as that of non-Brahmin Shaiva preceptors and their lay disciples. At the same time, this introduced anxieties among missionaries about controlling catechists, who often operated without the direct supervision of missionaries. This is most obvious in the third text, the *Vetavilakkam*, written against the Jesuits’ Lutheran rivals. In this text, Beschi offers his catechists with an aspiration towards achieving sainthood by offering the martyrdom of João de Brito (1647–1693) as a model. Beschi himself had participated in an inquiry towards Brito’s canonization in 1726, just two years before composing the *Vetavilakkam*, a text that was aimed at preventing catechists from apostatizing with the help of models of spiritual progress.

The second part of the book, entitled “Rhetorical Education”, focusses more specifically on Beschi and his specific role in catechist education. The third chapter thus discusses Beschi’s “Catholic Poetics and Politics of Space”. The chapter opens with a discussion of Beschi’s early life and education in Italy, especially the Jesuit College in Bologna, where he received a thorough education in rhetoric and grammar, and also engaged in devotional practices. Some of these themes foreshadow his later Tamil literary compositions. Beschi’s self-fashioning as a Tamil poet or *pulavar* is contextualized by Trento, by presenting details of his involvement in local politics after his arrival in South India, most importantly his close relationship with the Mughal warlord Chanda Sahib (d. 1752). Given the political roles played by poets within the ‘little kingdoms’ of the 18th-century Tamil country, Beschi assumed a recognizable garb through his engagement with poetry. It is in this light that Trento turns to an episode contained in the last canto of Beschi’s most important composition, the *Tempavani*, discussed in detail

in chapter 5. In this text, Beschi celebrates the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I (1640-1705) for consecrating Austria to St. Joseph, the hero of the poem. Thereby, he offered his Tamil audiences with the model of an ideal king devoted to St. Joseph. Beschi's engagement with Tamil poetry also took the shape, from 1731 onwards, in a school at the village of Elakkuricci, where he trained catechists in classical Tamil rhetoric and poetics. This school, in Trento's interpretation, functioned as a Christian version of the Shaiva monastery (*matam*), a central institution of Shaiva learning in the Kaveri Delta region.

It is in the context of this school that Trento contextualizes what is perhaps Beschi's most tantalizing composition, the *Tonnulvilakkam* ("The Illumination of the Classics"), a treatise on Tamil grammar and poetics that followed traditional Tamil linguistic and literary theory. This "Tamil Grammar of Persuasion" forms the subject of much of the fourth chapter. Why would an Italian Jesuit missionary compose a grammar of Tamil that was not according to the by-now well-studied model of missionary grammars aimed at training European missionaries, but as a traditional treatise on proper language and poetics that followed the plan of Tamil grammatical literature? Trento answers this question by positing the grammar, written around 1729-30, as precisely aimed at catechists studying at the Elakkuricci school, enabling them to compose Catholic literature in accordance with the rules of Tamil linguistic and literary theory as also Catholic decorum. In this context, Trento focuses precisely on the way in which Beschi departs from classical Tamil theory, either by introducing foundational ideas of early-modern European literary theory, especially the notion of *amplificatio*, or by curtailing and critiquing foundational elements of Tamil literary theory, especially the conventions of erotic poetry (Tamil *akam*, 'the interior'). Thereby, Beschi hoped to inspire the creation of Catholic literature in Tamil in a way that could compete in quality with existing non-Christian literature. This sets the context for Trento's discussion of yet another anti-Lutheran tract by him called *Lutterinattiyalpu* ("On the Nature of the Lutheran Flock"), in which Beschi ridicules the language of the recently published Lutheran translation of the Bible into Tamil by offering his own interpretation of chapter 9 of the *Apocalypse of John*.

It is in part 3, "Catholic Poetry in a Tamil World", that the book finally turns to Beschi's *magnum opus*, the 'epic' poem *Tempavani*, a title that can be interpreted either as "unfading bouquet" (*tempa ani*) or "cluster of sweet songs" (*tem pa ani*). In the fifth chapter, entitled "Writing for Eighteenth-Century Catechists", Trento first introduces this poem on the life of St. Joseph in generic terms as an example of both the Tamil "long poem" (*perunkappiyam*, cf. the Sanskrit *mahakavya*) and the European renaissance "Christian epic". She then analyses the poem's preface (*payiram*) in the light of Beschi's engagement with classical Tamil models such as Kampan's version of the Ramayana. Her discussion focusses particularly on the way the *Tempavani* relates the world of Beschi's mission and that of his catechist audience, to the realities of the life led by the holy family. This is illustrated by Trento through the example of the Santa Casa, the house that was allegedly inhabited by Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. This house was believed to have been miraculously transferred from Palestine to Loreto—where Beschi apparently visited as a young man—but it also became important in a variety of other missionary contexts, as the 'timeless' existence of the angels allowed it to exist at various places all at once. Beschi seems to have conceptualized the church at Elakkuricci, dedicated to the Virgin, as yet another instance of the Santa Casa. The example of the holy family's house also allowed for connecting Biblical Palestine and the 17th-century Tamil country, which is evoked in the poem through the descriptions of land- and cityscapes, typical of Tamil poetry. In order to demonstrate the relevance, especially of the mission context for the poem, Trento furthermore discusses the flight of the holy family to Egypt and the eventual conversion of that country. This allowed Beschi to decry local Indian religious traditions, especially Saivism, as a delusion created by Satan, as well as discuss the conversion narratives (and in one instance,

the resistance to conversion) of the Egyptian population in terms that would have been evocative for Beschi's audience.

That audience assumes centre-stage in the final chapter of the book, "Reading as an Eighteenth-Century Catechist". Here, Trento demonstrates how it was the importance of Beschi's work for the self-understanding of the catechist families he had helped to create, which ensured the transmission and recreation of his work, despite of the catastrophe of the papal suppression of Jesuits after 1773. Starting with an examination of existing manuscripts as well as the production of the *editio princeps* of the *Tempavani* in 1851, Trento traces the evidence for the continued use of the *Tempavani* and its exegesis in the context of catechist preaching. Manuscripts of the poem also assumed importance as heirlooms in the families of catechists, even in case of their conversion to Lutheranism. She also points to the (admittedly faint) evidence of the reception of Catholic texts in Shaiva contexts, and engages with the colonial 'rediscovery' of Beschi and his work. The catechists that formed the original audience of the poem remained central to all these stories. In the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, they used it and other works by Beschi to inhabit their own world that was as distinctly Catholic as it was Tamil.

Writing Tamil Catholicism is an amazingly rich investigation of Beschi's legacy and the social context of the mission and the catechists that animated that legacy. Trento skilfully weaves together history, religion, anthropology, and philology, to draw on the findings of each of these disciplines while developing a distinctive argument. In contrast to a lot of research on Beschi and the Madurai Mission, Trento's work is refreshingly unconcerned with the question of the infamous Malabar Rites controversy and the rediscovery of Beschi and his fellow missionaries as early proponents of Catholic 'inculturation'. While she remains fully grounded in the rich literature surrounding the controversy, it is not her primary focus. Instead, *Writing Tamil Catholicism* offers a rich history of the Madurai Mission during the first decades of the 18th century that gives equal weight to the missionaries as it does to local converts, especially to the figure of the catechist.

Trento uses a diverse array of sources, including archival documents and manuscripts from 18 archive institutions located in four countries, as well as printed primary and secondary sources. In the process, she not only negotiates various registers of Tamil, but sources-in a wide array of languages, including French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, and Portuguese. Equally impressive is the skill with which Trento draws these diverse sources of disparate (and at times antagonistic) backgrounds together to narrate the history of the *literarization*, to use Sheldon Pollock's term (2006: 5), of Catholic writing in Tamil. Much as Beschi himself assumed many garbs in the course of his life—devout student, ascetic missionary, humanist scholar, Tamil *pulavar*, post-Mughal courtier, educator—*Writing Tamil Catholicism* ranges over a wide terrain of sources surrounding Beschi's project of creating Catholic literature in Tamil and its afterlife among local Catholics, as well as some Shaivas and Protestants.

For me, two aspects of the book are particularly noteworthy, though certainly readers with predilections different than myself will find other things to praise. One aspect is that, while Beschi is certainly the 'hero' of Trento's story, she manages to present Beschi as part of a sociality that includes other Jesuits as well as the catechists. This is not to mention the cast of other side-characters as well, such as Mughal warlords, Pietist detractors, or 'religious chameleons', who were able to pass themselves off as Hindu, Christian, or Muslim, as the need arose. Trento's work is filled with valuable information on the world Beschi inhabited and the people he interacted with, among them lesser-known missionaries like Bertoldi. In many cases, Trento points to further lines of possible research and to the presence of existing, but as yet unexplored archival sources. For someone like me, who is primarily concerned with the history

of Tamil in the context of the Bay of Bengal, *Writing Tamil Catholicism* is particularly important in highlighting the way Beschi's training in Europe influenced his Tamil literary project. This becomes especially salient in chapter 4, where Trento discusses the way in which Beschi inserts concepts of early-modern Latin rhetoric into Tamil poetics, but also in the large number of early-modern sources for the many ideas voiced in his works and those of fellow Jesuits. *Tempavani*'s prime inspiration was a Spanish text, *Mystica ciudad de Dios* ("Mystical City of God") by the Franciscan Nun María de Jesus de Ágreda (1602–1665), but it was by no means the only European source for Beschi's writing. Trento's detailed engagement with Beschi's Jesuit background reveals what Tamil scholars all too easily forget, namely, that Beschi remained a foreigner in a strange land, however well he may have mastered the local idiom of intellectual distinction.

The other aspect that strikes me as particularly valuable about *Writing Tamil Catholicism* is the way Trento demonstrates the relevance of the study of Tamil literature for the history of 18th-century south-eastern India. In many ways, her book is a social history of Tamil literature in the 1720s and 1730s—at least, a particular segment of that literature. Most importantly, the book demonstrates that the composition of Tamil literature was not an unimportant elite pastime, but a vital social practice that played an important role in the self-fashioning of individuals and their social recognition by others. Beschi fundamentally understood this fact, and Trento is able to recover both Beschi's engagement with the social role of Tamil literature as well as the role his texts have assumed in the life of his audience since then.

Scholars of Tamil stand to learn a lot from Trento's approach, not only for the woefully neglected 18th century, but also for other periods of Tamil literary history. In contrast to other studies on Beschi, Trento does not offer a hagiography in which Beschi is similarly a devout Catholic and an ardent devotee of Tamil. She notes, for example, Beschi's predilection for the 12th century poet Kampan, author of the most important retelling of the *Ramayana* in Tamil, but she does not simplistically translate this into assuming that Beschi 'liked' Kampan. Rather, she points out that Beschi clearly competed with the Vaishnava Kampan (p. 223), systematically trying to outdo him—something also evident in the case of Beschi's Shaiva and Muslim contemporaries. The precolonial Tamil 'Republic of Letters' was clearly also a house divided, where common canons did not necessarily translate into harmonious respect for each other. In this context, it is important that Trento does highlight Beschi's somewhat shocking depiction of Siva as a grotesque 'false deity' invented by Satan, that is encountered in the *Tempavani* (pp. 245-249), a literary engagement that went hand in hand with religious controversy.

As I read *Writing Tamil Catholicism*, I also began to wonder in how far Beschi's vision of Tamil literature was, in some ways, deeply idiosyncratic. What I mean is, that Beschi's texts are not simply literary in themselves; they also create a certain vision of what Tamil literature was in the 18th century. And in this context, we would do well to refrain from seeing in Beschi's discourses a perfect mirror of Tamil literature. Trento points out how in his grammar *Tonnulvilakkam*, Beschi plainly rejected what were fundamental ideas of Tamil poetics in favour of his own vision, inspired by renaissance humanism. His engagement with Kampan offers, I believe, another instance. In celebrating the literary virtuosity achieved by an Italian Jesuit in literary Tamil, it is easy to overlook that his poem has a strangely anachronistic feel in the 18th-century literary landscape, partly because Beschi decided to follow Kampan more closely than was common in other 18th-century contexts. A prime example of this can be found in Beschi's preface (*payiram*) to *Tempavani*, which is clearly based on Kampan's preface to the *Ramayana*, but differs substantially from the way a contemporary Shaiva or Muslim poet would have structured a preface to a poem in the *kappiyam*-genre. The terse 'praise of God' (Tamil *katavul valttu*) at the beginning of *Tempavani* is certainly similar to Kampan's, but it is

no comparison to the complex praises offered in Shaiva and Muslim *puranas*, which often run into dozens of verses, and follow a complex hierarchical and temporal arrangement ranging from the supreme godhead to recent local saints and scholars. It would certainly have been possible to create a similar structure with Catholic entities, but Beschi seems to have decided against this. Partly, he may have perceived the Shaiva and Muslim parallels as peculiar to the *puranam*-subtype of the *kappiyam*, a type of poem he criticized in his Latin grammar of Tamil. But partly, it also shows a peculiar variety of classicism at play in Beschi, which differs from the manner Shaivas, Vaishnavas, or Muslims engaged with the Tamil literary heritage.

This should warn us against the temptation to succumb to a perspective about Beschi being a maverick master of Tamil, and of his choices as always appropriate from the perspective of Tamil audiences. As mentioned, Trento's book largely eschews this view, but it does nevertheless surface in a section where I find myself disagreeing with some of her interpretations: her discussion of the *Lutterinattiyalpu* at the end of the fourth chapter. Throughout her analysis, Trento depicts the Lutheran Bible translation as "completely alien textual objects" that, 'naturally' it seems, "could not find a home in South India" (p. 205). I would contend that this evaluation has more to do with European notions of language-use, than with the actual situation in 18th-century Tamil textual culture(s). Firstly, though we may describe the Bible as "a potpourri of histories, theological/philosophical commentaries, and intercultural references" (p. 205), would that mark the text as substantially different from, say, a Sanskrit *purana*? More importantly, there is no reason to assume that the choice to translate this text into unadorned prose would have been considered alien.

Quite on the contrary, we precisely possess such prose translations from Sanskrit in the Shaiva, and Arabic in the Muslim tradition that take the form of Tamil 'commentaries' on the Sanskrit or Arabic original. To top the parallel, these prose commentaries exhibit similar 'defects' of language like in the case of the Lutheran Bible—the use of colloquial forms, especially verbs, or following the source-language's syntax rather than the Tamil one. After all, the rules of grammar in Tamil primarily applied to poetry and not to prose, and it was, as Trento herself notes in the same chapter, largely Beschi's European predilections for prose that made him include prose in his *Tonnulvilakkam*. I am not arguing that the Lutheran language was of the same quality compared to translations from Sanskrit or Arabic by native speakers of Tamil, but only, in how far its low quality would have appeared alien to local audiences. There is certainly no reason to assume that Beschi's decision to render *Apocalypse 9* into 'refined' Tamil verse would have been considered more "appropriate" (p. 209). In fact, translating by way of explaining a foreign-language text in Tamil prose was a recognized (but practically unstudied) textual genre, including, at least in the translations from Arabic that I am more familiar with, translations / commentaries of 'scripture' (Tamil *vetam*).

In fact, offering a poetic translation of a scriptural text (without inclusion of the original language) would have been considered dangerous in some quarters, as it spelt the danger that audiences might take the Tamil translation as the 'original' (*mulam*) scripture, rather than recognizing it as a derivative text. Indeed, Beschi's choice is, in fact, highly unusual, since, as Trento herself notes, the counter-reformation Catholic church prohibited the translation of the Bible. As far as I know, this is Beschi's only instance of breaking that prohibition, and that too in a manner that could have led to uncomfortable questions about the nature of the Christian *vetam*. For example, it could have raised the question from Shaivas about why it was not in Tamil or at least Sanskrit, not to mention the danger that Beschi's translation would have been mistaken for the original. Beschi's somewhat 'heretic' choice is therefore understandable only in the precise context of his own peculiar combination of European and Tamil theories of language and his specific anxieties about the Lutherans. For however 'alien' the Tranquebar Bible may have been, it succeeded, as we know, in enticing away a number of Catholic

catechists throughout the next two centuries as converts to Lutheranism, with no indication of an opposite process taking place. Indeed, as Trento herself notes (pp. 296-298), this often happened with converts maintaining an attachment to Beschi's poetry, but obviously not enough to stay in the Catholic fold. As such, the Bible translation was obviously neither too alien nor too atrocious in comparison to the contradictions that it exposed about the Jesuit project. For as much as Beschi may have tried to present himself in the garb and terminology of non-Brahmin Shaivism, the fact that direct access to scripture and to priesthood was closed to Catholic catechists in the Madurai Mission may well have reminded catechists precisely of the Brahmin monopolization of the Sanskrit 'scripture' (*vetam*). In this context, Beschi's choice to reaffirm the monopolization of "the recitation and study of the Vedas" (p. 197) to the three upper castes, excluding his Sudra catechists, in the *Tonnulvilakkam*, explicitly translates Brahmin caste privilege into European missionary control over Catholic doctrine.

In this manner, I also would contend Trento's assertion (pp. 211-212) that Beschi was a forerunner of processes described for the 19th century by Bernard Bate (2021). While the connection between literary language and persuasion might already have been drawn by him, there was more that differentiated Beschi from Protestant preachers than the latter's "moralizing attitude towards textuality" (p. 211), as Trento herself notes elsewhere in a somewhat different context (p. 31 n. 76 and p. 161 n. 84). It was not simply moralizing, but it was the demand that texts be universally accessible, that differentiated the Protestant impact. And it was precisely that universalizing attitude that Beschi was opposed to in his denunciation of the Lutherans.

This discussion should in no way be understood as a criticism of Trento's scholarship and argument. Rather, it only serves to show how thought-provoking and important this study of an unusual man and his unusual choices in the early 18th century is, for generating a large range of wider questions regarding the intersection of textual cultures, religion, and history. Indeed, Trento challenges Tamil scholarship repeatedly to finally take the study of early-modern Tamil textual cultures seriously in raising important questions that, as yet, do not have an answer. One of these questions may well serve to close this review.

Trento repeatedly draws attention to the specific Catholic vocabulary used by Beschi, which employed Tamil words such as *vetam* for 'scripture' (p. 101) or *vanor* for the 'angels' (p. 241 n. 76), and asks how these vocabularies relate not only to Beschi's predominantly Shaiva interlocutors, but to other religions as well. Indeed, the comparison with Muslim usage that Trento suggests is particularly instructive, as Beschi's Muslim contemporaries were largely using the same vocabulary with the same references (though perhaps a bit more coherently). It is obvious that Muslims and Catholics could draw on a Tamil vocabulary that should not be misunderstood as peculiarly 'Hindu', but that already before the introduction of Islam or Catholicism had been able to talk across religious and cultural traditions. In this manner, Trento's book reminds us of the existence of 'universal' vocabularies outside, and in only partial overlap, with those of the contemporary English academe. Books like *Writing Tamil Catholicism* may help us to recover such alternative universalisms and help decolonize academia by making them accessible to renewed use.

Writing Tamil Catholicism is an amazingly wide-ranging and erudite study of Beschi and the creation of Catholic literature in Tamil in the context of the 18th-century Jesuit mission in India. Combining the study of history, literature, and religion in an exemplary manner, *Writing Tamil Catholicism* should be read not only by historians and literary scholars of early-modern South India, but also by anyone interested in making the study of texts and literature fruitful for larger historical questions. Students of Indian and Global History, Religious Studies, and Literature will find the book equally enriching and thought provoking. Finally, *Writing Tamil Catholicism*

represents by far the most thorough study of Costanzo Beschi and his literary project so far. I am certain that *Writing Tamil Catholicism* will become and remain a classic for many years to come.

References:

Bate B., (2021). *Protestant Textuality and the Tamil Modern: Political Oratory and the Social Imaginary in South Asia*. Annamalai E., Cody F., Jayanth M., Nakassis C.V., (eds.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pollock S., (2006). *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.