

12th Classical Tamil Summer Seminar in 2014

Organised by Eva Wilden at the centre of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient
in Pondicherry, 4th to 29th of August 2014

In 2014 we will have time once more to devote a full month to our 12th CTSS. This time we will try out yet another version of schedule. The last pandit has left the EFEO, at the proud age of 90 years, and with him the traditional way of teaching, with its traditional claims of authority, is gone. We are going through a phase of experimentation before we can settle on a new, satisfactory formula. The day will be split into three reading sessions of equal length that will be devoted to selected texts from different genres of Tamil literature. Classes will be presided over by experts (young and old, Indian and Western) who provide the material and present their work and view of the chosen text, but emphasis will be laid on the discussion in the forum. The goal will not be to arrive at a single “correct” translation, but rather to explore the different possibilities of understanding, based on commentary or argument. In accordance with the general philological outlook of the EFEO, work will not only proceed from the current editions but will include manuscript material photographed by our lab, or in the case of inscriptions photographs and estampages.

The first week will continue our reading of a literary text from the oldest part of surviving Tamil poetry, from the Caṅkam corpus, namely the *Neṭunalvātai*, with hundred-eighty-eight lines the second shortest among the ten long songs of the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. This session shall be conceived as a round-table meeting of the Caṅkam project[insert link to page], an occasion for its members to read together and discuss various issues of method and editorial procedure. Of course colleagues and students will be welcome to add their insight and voice their questions. The second and third week will be devoted to a text that has long popped up ever and again in our discussions, the *Pāṇṭikkōvai*, probably the first surviving representative of the important Kōvai genre, one of the few genres to remain alive right into the 19th century. Transmitted only as a collection of illustrative stanzas within Nakkīraṅ's commentary on the second great poetological treatise of the Tamil tradition, the *Kaḷaviyal* alias *Iraiyānār Akapporuḷ*, it is at the same time the junction between the earlier classical tradition of the *Caṅkam* and the later *Bhakti* corpora, and an panegyric poem of the Pāṇṭiya dynasty, often dated after the king it is supposed to glorify. The fourth week, finally, will dare an experiment in taking up the rarely read *Nīlakēci*, a Jain didactic poem narrating the story of the demoness *Nīlakēci*, dated to the late first millennium. The particular challenge is the commentary by Camayativākarar, written in a highly Sanskritised form of Tamil that might be described as Jaina Maṇipravāḷam.