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Comparative Linguistics and the Origins of the Dravidian Concept

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Comparative Linguistics and the Origins of the Dravidian Concept[1]

Iliyas Husain

Abstract

This paper observes that India came under the spell of Eurocentric language studies after its colonisation which used to associate language with nationality and ethnicity. After the origin of the genealogical idea of linguistic family and the development of comparative linguistics in Europe, especially the Indo-European comparative linguistics in Germany, Indian linguistic data such as dictionaries and grammar were utilised to suggest the presence of various linguistic families in India. The discovery of two major linguistic families—the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian—divided India into two major geographies and constructed strong linguistic and cultural identities in India.

Thomas R. Trautmann has suggested that it was F.W. Ellis and his acolytes at the Madras School of Orientalism who discovered the 'Dravidian Proof', based on their linguistic studies. K. Venkateswarlu further elaborated on this and suggested that the Telugu language was the site of study at Fort St. George where the Dravidian Proof was discovered. In the present study, we contradict both of them. We suggest that neither the Ellis group nor the Telugu language was solely responsible for paving the way for the origin and establishment of the Dravidian concept. We rather argue that the missionary-linguist, Robert Caldwell, and his study of the 'Comparative Grammar of South Indian languages' played the most crucial role. It shall be noted that German scholar Franz Bopp and his comparative grammatical studies on Indo-European language family influenced Caldwell. Hence, in the construction of colonial linguistic knowledge, methods and structure of studies were supplied by Europe; India however, provided the raw data.

Key words: Linguistics, Philology, Sanskrit, Dravidian, Multilingual, Identity construction, comparative grammar, dialect, orientalism.

[1] This paper is a revised version of the public lecture delivered at PMML, New Delhi on 16th May 2023.

The origin of the Dravidian idea which transformed into a concept played a significant role in the politics of India. Dravidian politics is considered the strongest regional politics based on regional, cultural, and language identity.[2] Dravidian, nowadays, encompasses within it not only a distinct linguistic-cultural-ethnic identity but also includes in it a separate economic, and sometimes sub-national identity.[3] Robert Hardgrave in 1965, while quoting *The Hindu*, dated 11 February 1946, noted that,

> on the eve of independence, E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, leader of newly formed Dravida Kazagham in Madras, called upon the Dravidian people of South India "to guard against a transfer of power from British to the Aryans." Fearing Brahman dominance under Aryan "imperialism" Naicker called for the formation of a separate South Indian state, Dravidasthan, enjoining his followers to sign a pledge of support for complete separation from the Indian Union.[4]

Hardgrave, however, noted that within only eight years this divisive politics transformed due to the Tamilization of the Congress party in Madras. He also noted that Naicker himself rejected that politics in the 1950s. Nevertheless, in 1960 an American journalist turned scholar, Selig Seidelman Harrison, who specialized in South and East Asia, and worked with the Center for International Policy, a think tank based in Washington DC, wrote a book on India. He declared that India would not survive due to various fault lines in politics, especially emerging issues on caste and language. He envisioned India as diversified as Europe and believed that a multilingual India could not survive as a unit, as Europe too did not.[5] This was an opaque view nevertheless, built on strong perspectives

[2] Since the origin of the Dravidian idea in the nineteenth century, Dravidian has been seen as a linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identity. The identity intensified with the emergence of a strong Dravidian movement which was both political and cultural at the same time, in the twentieth century. First, the DK, Dravida Kazagham followed by the DMK, a strong regional political party of Tamil Nadu, became the vehicle of this political-cultural movement. For the Dravidian movement see Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., *The Dravidian Movement*, Popular Prakashan: *Bombay*, 1965.

[3] Beyond political, cultural, and linguistic identities, the term Dravidian has been recently used to ascribe a variety of differences between North and South India. Some scholars are now talking about the 'Dravidian Model' of a political economy that has been evolving in Tamil Nadu which is socially and economically more inclusive than the national model of the political economy of India. The model is primarily based on welfare to reduce poverty. See for example Kalaiyarasan A. and Vijayabaskar M., *The Dravidian Model: Interpreting the Political Economy of Tamil Nadu*, Cambridge University Press, 2021; also, S. Narayan, *The Dravidian Years: Politics and Welfare in Tamil Nadu*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

[4] Hardgrave Jr., *The Dravidian Movement*, p.1.

[5] Selig S. Harrison wrote: "India's struggle for national survival is a struggle against herself. As a civilization and as an integrated cultural whole, India has shown a power of survival rivalled only by China. But multilingual India's separate territories have failed as consistently as Europe's to hold together as a political unity." Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Princeton University Press, 1960, p. 3.

and historical experiences in Europe. The construction of language identities in India had a close relation with European studies, as we shall observe below. But it did not culminate in divisions such as in Europe.

In this study, we shall focus on the construction of the identity of the linguistic family. Indeed, our focus would remain on the construction of Dravidian linguistic family identity. This identity was the key to the construction of a broad ethnic, cultural, economic, and political Dravidian identity. We shall also observe that the Dravidian linguistic family idea was constructed through comparative linguistics which evolved in nineteenth-century Europe, especially in Germany after the formation of an initial hypothesis by William Jones. It has been observed that German scholarship played a key role in the evolution of comparative linguistics with its focus on the study of the Indo-European linguistic family. The methods and ideas that evolved in Europe were applied to the linguistic data available in India and the idea of different linguistic families was constructed. In another way, we can say that Eurocentric studies paved the way for the construction of linguistic identities—in this particular study the Dravidian identity—in India.

Scholarly works on the origin of Dravidian concept and our hypotheses

Thomas R. Trautmann in his wonderful study *Language and Nation: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* argues that F.W. Ellis and his circle—comprised of his junior, A.D. Campbell, the grammarian of the Telugu language, and two Telugu Brahmins, namely Pattabhirama Shastri and Sankaraiah—had first mooted the concept that South Indian languages have a different origin than Sanskrit.[6] He noticed that the Dravidian concept came to the fore with the publication of Campbell's Telugu grammar. Trautmann termed this the 'Dravidian Proof', which emerged in the 'Madras School of Orientalism' at Fort St. George College. Trautmann also conceptualized that the 'Madras School of Orientalism' was in many ways different from the 'Bengal School of Orientalism' as it

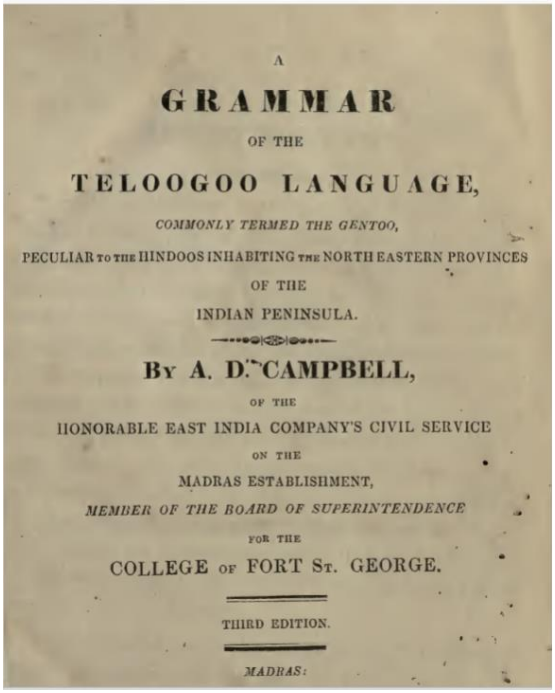
[6] Thomas R. Trautmann, *Language and Nation: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras*, University of California, 2006.

relied on local cultural studies.[7] We shall find below that Thomas R. Trautmann has actually elevated the position of F.W. Ellis over Robert Caldwell in the construction of a Dravidian concept.[8] Robert Caldwell, without a doubt, played the most significant role in the making of a Dravidian concept. Caldwell, who was a Tamil philologist and a missionary working at Tirunelveli, was the first linguist to introduce the 'Dravidian' term primarily for South Indian languages based on the comparison of their grammars. He also explained the reasons to make the 'Dravidian' a generic term. His study, the writing of a comparative grammar of Dravidian languages, in 1856, was the first attempt in India to firmly establish the idea of a 'Dravidian Family of Languages'. Indeed, Caldwell derived insights from Franz Bopp, a German linguist, who published a similar work on the Indo-European language family from 1833 to 1852, which was the first work of comparative grammar after the emergence of modern comparative linguistics. The Dravidian concept of Robert Caldwell was also so impressive that within a decade in 1866, John Beames produced a language map of India, the first of its kind in many ways. He depicted two linguistic families in India—Indo-Aryan and Dravidian, assigning two different colours—red and blue respectively. Beames, influenced by Caldwell's work later published his study *A Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages* in three volumes. Caldwell's work was also influential in generating a Dravidian movement in the 20th-century South India.

[7] Trautmann has recently edited a volume titled 'Madras School of Orientalism'. He proposes that the Asiatic Society of Calcutta did not understand the peculiarities of South India. He rightly says that the intellectuals working in Madras were better equipped with the language, history, religion and law of South India. Based on this understanding, he argues that the 'Madras School of Orientalism' produced a different variety of Orientalism in nineteenth-century British India. If we consider this argument valid then in the Bengal School there were as many schools of orientalism as the number of scholars who worked under the patronage of the Asiatic Society and the Fort William College. For Trautmann's argument see Thomas R. Trautmann, ed., *Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

[8] Trautmann, however, gave more credit to F.W. Ellis for conceptualizing a 'Dravidian Proof' but acknowledged the contribution of other scholars at Madras School as he wrote: "Although Ellis is the primary figure in the story of the Dravidian concept, in that he authored the published proof, it will become clear that it was the work of many hands." See Thomas R. Trautmann, *Language and Nation*, p. 73.

F. W. Ellis



A

GRAMMAR

OF THE

TELOOGOO LANGUAGE,

COMMONLY TERMED THE GENTOO,

PECULIAR TO THE HINDOOS INHABITING THE NORTH EASTERN PROVINCES

OF THE

INDIAN PENINSULA.

BY A. D. CAMPBELL,

OF THE

HONORABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S CIVIL SERVICE

ON THE

MADRAS ESTABLISHMENT,

MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF SUPERINTENDENCE

FOR THE

COLLEGE OF FORT ST. GEORGE.

THIRD EDITION.

MADRAS:

The Front Page of the Telugu Grammar containing Ellis' Note to Introduction

The work of Caldwell made him a great figure in the eyes of the Tamil people. In 1968 during the Second World Tamil Conference, his statue was erected at Marina Beach in Chennai as a tribute to his contribution to Dravidian linguistics.[9] In 2010, the Indian government issued a commemorative postage stamp in his memory. Caldwell's work and contribution to Dravidian linguistics was so influential that it was republished soon after the Indian independence. The University of Madras republished his *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Languages* in 1956, to commemorate the centenary of its publication.[10] The first two editions of this authoritative grammar were

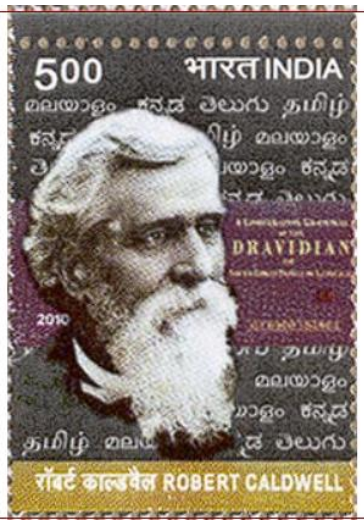
[9] In 1967, the first Dravidian government was formed. C.N. Annadurai, the Chief Minister of Madras state took several steps to assert Tamil identity in the province. The name of Madras State was changed to Tamil Nadu. The Second International Tamil Conference was organized at the University of Madras in January 1968. On this occasion, to commemorate the people who contributed to the growth of the Tamil language, literature, and history, 10 statues facing Marina Beach were unveiled. Among the ten there were three people of foreign origin. These were Constanzo Beschi, G.U. Pope, and Robert Caldwell.

[10] The Registrar of the University of Madras, R. Ravi Verma, recorded that Bishop Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages* has long been out of print. There has been a demand for this work from scholars. On a resolution moved by Sri D. Ramalinga Reddi at the meeting of the Senate held on the 17th November 1953, that the University might undertake to bring out a new edition

published by Caldwell himself—in 1856 and then in 1875. Within a decade of his death, the work went out of print. It was due to the importance of the work that it was reprinted after forty years by the University of Madras. Rev. J. L. Wyatt and T. Ramakrishna Pillai, the editors of the third edition of *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian* or *South-Indian Family of Languages*, acknowledge the contribution of Robert Caldwell in these words:

> Bishop Caldwell's Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages is so well known a classic of Indian philology as to need no introduction to readers who are interested in the ethnology or linguistics of India.[11]

Despite this original and influential contribution, the scholarship on the Dravidian concept does not evaluate Robert Caldwell's work in the historical evolution of comparative linguistics in India. Instead, Trautmann gave primacy to Ellis over Caldwell.



07th May 2010: A commemorative postage stamp on

ROBERT CALDWELL

Denomination INR 05.00

Courtesy: postagestamps.gov.in

K. Venkateswarlu in his book, *Colonialism, Orientalism and the Dravidian Languages,* strongly argues that 'the Dravidian Proof' was an outcome of the study of Telugu

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of this publication, the Syndicate resolved to bring out this reprint edition. See J. L. Wyatt and T. Pillai, Eds., *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages by the RT. Rev. Robert Caldwell, D.D., LL.D.*, Third and Revised Edition, University of Madras: Madras, 1956. (Hereafter Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family*)

[11] Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family*. Editors Preface to the Third Edition, p. iii.

language and grammar.[12] Venkateswarlu, a political scientist, was studying the process of the development of the written examinations for civil services. Accidentally, he found some material on the programme of teaching the Telugu language at the College of Fort St George, Madras.[13] He noted that the 'Telugu language was the site for the genesis of the concept of Dravidian language family'.[14] He observed that the:-

> joint study of Telugu language and its grammatical tradition by the British and native [Telugu] scholars at the College of Fort St George, Madras in the second decade of the nineteenth century culminated in the formation and publication of the concept of the Dravidian language family.[15]

A civil servant, Alexander D. Campbell was the first colonial scholar who published a grammar of the Telugu language.[16] In this Telugu grammar, a 'Note to the Introduction' was authored by F.W. Ellis. He was a senior civil servant, the collector of Madras, and also the Chairman of the Board of the College. Ellis was a scholar of South Indian languages and is known for a dissertation on three South Indian languages—Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam.[17] The first published dissertation was the 'Note to the Introduction' to Campbell's *Grammar of Teloogoo language*. It has been noted that it was in the dissertation on the Telugu language, in which the idea of a distinct-than-Sanskrit source of origin of Telugu was first expressed by Ellis.[18] Venkteswarlu proceeded to emphasize the Telugu origin of the Dravidian concept, by naming a lot of scholars who have expressed similar opinions. The role of F.W. Ellis is, however, best studied by Thomas R. Trautmann. Trautmann does not categorically agree with Venkteswarlu that

[12] K. Venkateswarlu, *Colonialism, Orientalism and the Dravidian Languages*, Routledge: New Delhi, 2012.
[13] Ibid, p.4
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Alexandar D. Campbel, *A Grammar of Teloogoo Language, Commonly Termed the Gentoo, Peculiar to the Hindoos Inhabiting the North Eastern Provinces of Indian Peninsula*, Fort St George College Press: Madras, 1816.
[17] Trautmann cited in Venkateswarlu, *Colonialism, Orientalism and the Dravidian Languages*, p. 11.
[18] Ellis wrote in the 'Note' that "the nation (Telegu speaking area) still retains some faint remembrance of those times, in which their language existed independent of Sanscrit, and it is certain that every Teloogoo Grammarian, from the days of Nunnia Bhutt to the present period, considers the two languages as derived from sources entirely distinct". Cited in Venkateswarlu, *Colonialism, Orientalism and the Dravidian Languages*, p. 11.

Telugu was a site for the origin of 'Dravidian proof'.[19] It seems that the work of Trautmann deeply influenced Venkteswarlu as it influenced many in South India. He aimed to find the language that may have provided a 'Dravidian proof' to Ellis and his circle. Venkteswarlu ignored the importance of Tamil linguistic studies which might have played a greater role in the construction of a 'Dravidian proof', even in the mind of Ellis. We know that F.W. Ellis was fascinated by the Tamil language and literature. His Tamil studies, unfortunately, remained unpublished and later partly lost too. Nevertheless, the available sources show that he was more interested in Tamil than Telugu and found it more refined than the latter.

It is equally possible that Tamil studies have generated the 'Dravidian proof' in the mind of Ellis, though the 'proof' was first published in the Telugu grammar of Campbell. Whichever southern language may have provided the 'Dravidian proof', we must recognize that a 'Dravidian proof' was not a guarantee for the categorical division of two linguistic families— Aryan and Dravidian—in India. In the nineteenth century, research solely based on scholarly studies and constituted within the paradigm of comparative linguistics could only establish the concept of a linguistic family. We shall find that Caldwell did this particular work to establish a family relationship among the South Indian languages through his comparative grammar. Indeed, Ellis had never used the word 'Dravidian' to denote South Indian languages, ethnicity or culture.

Therefore, two chief hypotheses shall be evaluated in this paper. First, the emergence of comparative linguistics played the most crucial part in the emergence of a separate Dravidian concept. Second, it would be rather wrong to believe that F.W. Ellis or the 'Madras School of Orientalism', as argued by Thomas R. Trautmann, solely were responsible for the origin of a Dravidian concept. We shall find that early missionaries

[19] Producing the Foreword in the Venkateswarlu's book, Trautmann doubted that Telugu was the site for the origin of the Dravidian concept. Trautmann had already written that 'I will demonstrate that what made it possible for Ellis and his team at Madras to formulate the Dravidian concept was the fact that existing grammars treated Telugu like a Prakrit language, while Tamil grammar treated Tamil as a self-contained entity and largely ignored Sanskritic and Prakritic elements in the language'. See Trautmann, *Languages and Nations*, p. 59.

such as Beschi and later missionary-linguist Robert Caldwell made a significant contribution that framed a Dravidian concept.

The origin of Comparative Linguistics

The origin of the idea of a linguistic family was a turning point, a paradigm shift, in the history of modern linguistics. William Jones is admired for establishing this fascinating idea. This was later termed the idea of a 'Proto-Indo-European' language, first expressed in the Third Discourse delivered at the Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta in 1786.[20] This discourse is admired for the opening of a true comparative philology, later termed comparative linguistics, as a new discipline not only in India but also in Europe. Due to his extraordinary contribution to linguistics, William Jones is known as the father of comparative linguistics. Some very good biographies are written on him.[21] Thomas R. Trautmann, in one of his famous books, traced the importance of this particular contribution of Jones.[22]

However, we should recognize that in Europe philology had been emerging as an interesting science since the time of the Renaissance. In Europe, the ground for the origin of comparative linguistics was primarily laid down through the search for the origin of nationalities. Mirko Tavoni observes that three factors—nationalism, mosaic ethnology, and new language data from colonies—were crucial in the development of primitive

[20] In his famous and highly quoted speech, Jones said: "The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the G*reek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of the grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps no longer exists; there is similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothick* and the *Celtick*, though blended with very different idioms, had the same origin with the *Sasncrit*; and the old *Persian* might be added to the same family, if this were the place to discussing any question concerning the antiquities of *Persia*." See Anna Maria Jones, ed., *The Works of Sir William Jones*, vol. I, London, 1799, p. 26.

[21] Three best-known biographies of William Jones are: Garland Canon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones-The Father of Modern Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990; Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer and Linguist, 1746-1794*, Oxford University Press: New York, 2011; S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1968.

[22] Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryan and British India*, University of California Press: Berkley and Los Angeles, 1997.

comparative linguistics in early modern times.[23] He finds that scholars have often looked towards languages to answer the question of nationality. We are told that the nationalist ideology in Europe was strongly based on ethnicity.[24] Therefore, language-ethnicity-nationality created a triangular identity through which the past of people could be traced. The classical vernacular debates,[25] the search for primeval language,[26] and the search for mosaic ethnology[27] were a few outcomes of the nationality query. The religious-mythical idea of the origin of languages was a strong sentiment found in almost every grammarian of Europe in the seventeenth century. Simone, indeed, argues that 'the dispute of divine and human origin re-echo until the end of the eighteenth century in the debates of Berlin Academy.'[28] Nonetheless, the Berlin Academy was the place where German linguists first challenged the religious-mythical idea in the nineteenth century. The religious-mythical idea of the origin of languages had its influence over the British philologers too. Trautmann recognizes the influence of mosaic ethnology had on Willian Jones as well. He argues that,

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[23] Mirco Tavoni, "Renaissance Linguistics" in Giulio C. Lepschy (ed.), *History of Linguistics,* Vol. 3, Routledge: London and New York, 2014; first published in 1998.

[24] The Importance of ethnicity in nationalist ideology is highlighted by Anthony Smith. For a discussion on this theory of nationalism, see Anthony D. Smith, *nationalism and Modernism: A critical survey of recent theories of nation and nationalism*, Routledge: London. 1998.

[25] With the emergence of national consciousness, in the sixteenth century, a process of emancipation and standardization of national vernacular began in Europe. This process propelled many linguists across Europe to study the rudiments of vernacular languages. As a result, the grammar and dictionaries of these national vernaculars were written. As an offshoot, these scholars tried to explain the position of the vernacular with reference to the classical languages. Tavoni notices that the *Grammatica della lingua Toscana*, an Italian grammar written by Battista Albarti from 1437 to 1441 and the *Gramatica de la lengua Catellana*, a Spanish grammar written by Antonio de Nebrija in 1491, were the only two examples of the grammars of vernacular languages written in Europe in the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century a grammar for almost every European vernacular language was published. Tavoni, ibid, p. 29.

[26] The search for primeval language often culminated in placing Hebrew at the top due to its oldest written literature. Guillaume Postal was perhaps the first scholar who prepared a genealogy of known languages. This genealogy placed Hebrew at the top and higher position as compared to Greek or Latin. Tavoni, ibid, p. 53; Hieronimus Megiser wrote *Thesaurus Polyglottus* in 1603 in which he collected words from 400 languages. He compared these languages based on the data collected and hierarchically arranged them. Hebrew was again presented at the top of the hierarchy. Etienne Guichard, a French linguist, who wrote *Harmonie étimologique* in 1606, also argued that all the languages were derived from Hebrew based on an etymological study. See Raffaele Simone, "The Early Modern Period", in Giulio C. Lepschy (ed.), *History of Linguistics,* Vol.3, pp. 162-63.

[27] Raffaele Simone suggested that "in the seventeenth century, belief in the divine origin of language was still very widespread, a belief based on some passages from Genesis, such as the narrative of Adam's creation of language and that of scattering of languages with the Tower of Babel." Simone, ibid, p. 151.

[28] Simone, "The Early Modern Period", p. 152.

> Jones' proposal of the Indo-European language family is better understood when we recognize that the character of Jones's project was primarily ethnological, not linguistic; that his ethnology is of a kind that we may call 'Mosaic', that is, an ethnology whose frame is forwarded by the story of the descendant of Noah in the book of Genesis, attributed to Moses, in the Bible.[29]

Whatever the differences may be between these approaches, it is difficult to separate the two factors—nationalism and mosaic ethnology—from the language studies in the early modern period in Europe. Mirko Tavoni has argued that 'the nationalistic and religious motives were often intertwined, and variously combined and exploited as each took over from the other'.[30]

Amongst the linguists of the seventeenth century, the influence of the work of Gottfried W. von Leibniz was in a way extraordinary. He was a mathematician and philosopher with intense linguistic interests.[31] Leibniz was an innovator of many ideas, though he believed in the biblical myth of the spread of languages. He linked the migration of people with changes in languages. The transformations in languages, he proclaimed, could be understood through the study of etymologies. He believed that ancient migrations were responsible for the origin of various ethnologies and nations. He also advised that "etymologies much extended would be curious and significant; but it is necessary to unite the languages of many people and not to make too many leaps from one nation to another far distance without having good verifications".[32] Therefore, Leibniz very strongly associated etymology with ethnicity and national identity.

It was noticed that Leibniz introduced a couple of ideas for comparing languages: one, to collect the translation of the Lord's Prayer in various languages; and second, to create a list of words of everyday objects.[33] Indeed, the most important contribution made by Leibniz was to create this word list of everyday objects. In this word list, he sought information on natural and common words such as names of numbers, words used for different relations, names of body parts, terms for daily necessities, names of natural

[29] Trautmann, *Aryan and British India*, p. 40.
[30] Tavoni, "Renaissance Linguistics", p. 45.
[31] Simone, "The Early Modern Period, p. 183.
[32] Ibid, p. 187.
[33] Ibid, p. 188.

objects, and words for human actions.[34] While it is true that others also evolved word lists to compare languages, Leibniz chose those words which were, he thought, used by humans in the early age of conversation through language. It was also noted that Leibniz was the first linguist who had suggested cartographical representations of the languages.[35] In many ways, hence, Leibniz was instrumental in paving the way for eighteenth-century linguistic study. It was this background in which William Jones' essay, the 'Third Discourse', was received in Europe with fascination and appreciation. Jones, however, did not reveal his methods. It is believed that he compared grammars of various languages to reach his conclusion on similarities. Similar to European studies, William Jones' ethno-cultural history of Asian people divided Asians into five nations: Hindus, Arabs, Tartars, Persians and Chinese. The ethno-cultural history of these nationalities was described in the five consecutive annual discourses that Jones wrote, from the third discourse to the seventh discourse. In a way, the study of William Jones was an outcome of the philological studies in Europe. In another way, William Jones introduced an original thought in primitive comparative linguistics with his idea of a common ancestor of Indian and European languages.

A breakthrough in linguistic studies swept when the idea of linguistic family was proposed by William Jones. William Jones' celebrated speech, the 'Third Discourse', is recognized as the origin of comparative linguistics.[36] These ideas were first taken back to Europe. Franz Bopp, a German linguist, wrote the first comparative grammar of Sanskrit, Old Persian, Greek, Latin, Old Slavonic, Gothic, and German in six volumes. This work strengthened the concept of the Indo-European language family. Based on the comparative study of grammars of these languages, Bopp's work proved that Indo-European was not simply a hypothetical idea as imagined by William Jones but was a real language in the past which we have lost now.

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[34] For Leibniz's word list see more in Trautmann, *Language and Nation*, p. 32.

[35] Simone, "The Early Modern Period", p. 188.

[36] Garland Cannon in a biography on William Jones treated him as the father of comparative linguistics. Many linguists, however, challenge this image of Jones. See Garland Canon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones-The Father of Modern Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990.

In the nineteenth century, German scholars paved the idea of modern comparative linguistics in Europe. Anna M. Davies noticed that "Traditionally, Rask, Bopp, and Grimm are seen as the initiators of comparative linguistics, Bopp *qua* founder of comparativism, Grimm *qua* founder of historical linguistics, Rask as the precursor of both."[37] Ramsus Rask was, however, primarily a grammarian. He wrote grammars of classical and modern European languages but did not deal with Sanskrit or any Indian language. He, based on his studies of various European grammars, proclaimed that 'inflexions are not borrowed and hence, grammatical agreement is the most certain indication of kinship' in various languages.[38] Based on this idea, later Franz Bopp developed the method of comparison of grammars. He separated root from inflexion to develop a comparative method. Bopp wrote the first comparative grammar of Indo-European languages. He published his magnum opus known as the *Comparative Grammar of Indo-European* in six volumes, from 1833 to 1852. However, Bopp had already inaugurated the new discipline of comparative linguistics in 1816 with the publication of the system of conjugation in Indo-European languages.[39] In 1816 he published *Über das Konjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache (On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit in comparison with that of Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic).* In this book, Bopp developed a method of comparing languages through the comparison of their conjugation system. In this work, Bopp treated Sanskrit as the ancestor of European languages. Anna M. Davies notes that "Previous writers had underlined the importance of grammatical comparison, but no one had brought the analysis of morphology and its history to Bopp's level."[40] Jacob Grimm is known for establishing the genetic method in comparative linguistics. He studied various stages of Germanic languages from older to modern. With this study, he developed a comparative genetic method called Grimm's Law.[41] In this method, Grimm analyzed consonantal shifts in Germanic languages and developed a general law to predict the change. Before

[37] Anna Morpurgo Davies, *History of Linguistics*, Vol. 4, Longman: London, New York, 1998, p. 122.
[38] Davies, *History of Linguistics*, p. 126.
[39] Trautmann, *Aryan and British India*, p. 132.
[40] Davies, *History of Linguistics*, Vol. 4, p. 131.
[41] Davies, ibid, p. 142.

Grimm, another German linguist, Willman von Humboldt explained various ways in which languages may be seen to relate to each other,

- Only languages in which we see identity or similarity of concrete grammatical forms belong to the same stock.
- Languages which do not have such a similarity of concrete grammatical forms but share a part of their vocabulary belong to same area.
- Languages which do not have common grammatical forms or common vocabulary but show similarity or identity of grammatical viewpoint (in the linguistic form understood from a conceptual point of view) belong to same class.
- Languages which are not similar in either words, or grammatical forms, or grammatical viewpoint, are unrelated to each other and share only what is common to all human languages as such.[42]

Therefore, it was first argued by Humboldt that in the case of the same genetic origin, it was possible that languages do not share concrete grammatical forms. Jacob Grimm in his study established that change in consonant was a law. Through these linguistic studies, modern comparative linguistics evolved ahead of comparative grammatical studies or old-day philological studies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The modern comparative linguistics was armed with a genealogical idea of a language family which was unique and instrumental for the new explorations in linguistics and other sciences. Davies noted that,

> we witness a remarkable change in the status of comparative linguistics; the newcomer, which had used for its justification the parallel with comparative anatomy, now acquires a leading role; at various times ethnology, anthropology, palaeontology, law, etc. came to look at it as a possible model. The comparative method understood in the historical genealogical sense spreads from linguistics to social sciences.[43]

We have discussed the origin of comparative linguistics in brief till the mid-nineteenth century in Europe. These developments influenced linguistic scholars in India as well. We must remember that the language-family idea or the genealogical origin idea became a chief component of comparative linguistics. In the case of the Dravidian concept, we would observe that an argument put forward by G. U. Pope, based on a

[42] Quoted in Davies, *History of Linguistics*, p. 111.
[43] Davies, ibid, p. 111.

literary and grammatical comparison of Sanskrit and Tamil, was not taken seriously as it lacked a genealogical comparison. The idea based on a separate genealogical origin of Dravidian along with grammatical comparison not only survived but thrilled the scholars and people alike.

In Europe, till the nineteenth century, though, vernacular languages had been identified as national languages. The search for primeval or original language was replaced with the interest to study the Indo-European language family. The emerging comparative linguistics through its focus on the Indo-European linguistic family replaced Hebrew from the position of the ancestral language of all languages. Modern linguistics jolted the search for mosaic ethnology as well and it established the idea that instead of the origin of languages from a single primeval language, there were language families from which modern languages had emerged. Hence, all languages of the world did not derive from a common ancestor language as seen in the mosaic ethnology. The methodological development of comparative linguistics paved the way for the search of other language families as well. In Europe, comparative linguistics had been used to establish language-family links between modern European languages as early as in the late eighteenth century.[44] It was further developed by German linguists in the nineteenth century. In India, similar methods of comparative linguistics were applied to find family relations among the Indian languages. Through these studies, the concepts of the Indo-Aryan language family and the Dravidian language family were constructed. Some other languages were categorized as neither Indo-Aryan nor Dravidian; later found to be part of other families of languages. But the idea of these two linguistic families viz. the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian were very significant for the construction of strong linguistic identities in India. These two language families are big and cover most parts of India excluding only some tribal regions. Moreover, these two families divide India into two big and almost equal geographical regions of north and south. Based on linguistic-family diversity India was later assumed to be divided into two cultural traditions and two ethnicities as well. Whereas the study of the Indo-Aryan language family was a direct

[44] Simone finds that in the 18th century itself, the Ugro-Finnish and the Uralo-Altaic families were identified. Simone, "The Early Modern Period", p. 188.

outcome of the origin of the Indo-European concept, the origin of the Dravidian concept was an extraordinary one. The concept of a Dravidian language family evolved on the basis of the comparative study of the grammar of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tulu, called the South Indian languages. However, the framework and methods of comparative linguistics were provided by European scholars, especially German linguists. These methods were applied in colonial India by British scholars in the study of linguistic families.

It has been found that the origin of a Dravidian concept strongly established linguistic diversity in India. Hence, we wish to know who the real founders of the Dravidian concept are. How was the genealogical idea of language family very crucial in the origin of the Dravidian concept? These are the few queries we would like to address in the next part of this essay. We shall first analyze the various roots of the origins of a Dravidian concept, especially the comparative linguistic study of Dravidian, and then move on to discuss the study of the Indo-Aryan language family in the construction of the Dravidian concept. These two prime studies, we shall find, were a direct outcome of the evolution of comparative linguistics.

Comparative Linguistics and the origins of the Dravidian concept

Robert Caldwell, a Presbyterian Scottish who became an Evangelist missionary arrived at Madras in 1838 under the London Missionary Society. Later he joined the Angelical Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Caldwell was settled by the society at Tirunelveli where, after 36 years of missionary work, he rose to become one of the Bishops of Tirunelveli.[45] As a missionary, Caldwell worked among the poor, downtrodden, and lower-caste people of Tirunelveli. Based on his engagement with the masses and the extensive knowledge he developed, of Tirunelveli, Caldwell later wrote a book on the history of Tirunelveli titled *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely*.[46] It was also with his close association with the masses, that he learned the

[45] Y. Vincent Kumaradoss, *Robert Cadwell: A Scholar-Missionary in Colonial South India*, Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge: Delhi, 2007.
[46] Robert Caldwell, *A Political and General History of the District of Tinnevely*, Government Press: Madras, 1881.

Tamil language, especially the language which was spoken by the poor and lower-class people in South India. After more than three decades of studying Tamil, Caldwell produced an extraordinary work, the first of its kind in India, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages*. He published his work in 1856 as the outcome of his comparative study. The work was the first of its kind as there was no precedence in India for writing a comparative grammar of Indian languages. However, writing the grammar of a language was an age-old tradition in India which goes back to *Panini* but, there was no tradition of comparing the grammars of different languages and suggesting a link between them. This tradition of comparing grammars nonetheless emerged in Early Modern Europe. The simultaneity and similarity of comparative linguistic studies in Europe and India, as both scholars used the same method of comparison to establish family connections among the languages, were extraordinary. It shows that language studies in colonial India were closely following the patterns and methods developed in Europe. Later, John Beames, who was influenced by the work of Caldwell, wrote *A Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages of India*. The *Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages* was published in 1872. Beames was working in Calcutta. The early reception of Caldwell's work in the North suggests that the 'Bengal School of Orientalism' and the 'Madras School of Orientalism' were not contrary but complementary to each other.

The importance of comparative linguistics in inaugurating linguistic families can be understood when we compare another study on Tamil with Caldwell's study. George Uglow Pope was a British missionary, scholar, and linguist who specialised in the study of the Tamil language and literature in the late nineteenth century.[47] Pope's most significant work was the translation of the Tirukkural in 1886. Earlier, he had published 'A Tamil Handbook: Or Full Introduction of the Common Dialect of that Language.[48] He

[47] I am indebted to Meenakshi Jain, Senior Fellow (2020-2022) at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, for constantly attracting my attention toward G.U. Pope and his Tamil studies. She told me that Pope observed similarities in Sanskrit and Tamil languages. She was curious as to why Caldwell's study was taken more seriously than Pope's study on Tamil.

[48] G. U. Pope, A Tamil Handbook: Or Full Introduction the Common Dialect of that Language, On the Plan of Ollendorf and Arnold For the Use of Foreigner Learning Tamil, and of Tamilians Learning English, American Mission Press: Madras, Second Edition 1859.

also re-published the Latin translation of a Tamil grammar written by Fr. Beschi.[49] Constantius Joseph Beschi was an Italian Jesuit missionary who arrived in Goa in 1707. The Carnatic Nawab Chanda Sahib made him his Diwan where Beschi worked for a short time. He learned Tamil and adopted local dress and customs to understand and reach out to the natives.[50] Beschi is known to have an innovative way of learning Tamil grammar. He assumed that the textual Tamil language or the high Tamil is completely different from the Tamil as spoken by common people. Hence, he wrote two separate grammars for these two dialects titled, 'A Grammar of the Common Dialect of the Tamil Language called Koṛuntamil', published in 1728; and 'A Grammar of the High Dialect of the Tamil Language called Centamil', published in 1730. We must recognize that Robert Caldwell in his 'Comparative Grammar' focused on the language of the people, rejecting the high Tamil which was strongly influenced by the Sanskrit language and literary traditions. Trautmann observes that F.W. Ellis's plan was in line with Beschi's unfinished work on Tamil language and history.[51] Hence, the early study of Tamil by Beschi was innovative and indirectly it also influenced the origin of a Dravidian concept. It seems that G. U. Pope was also influenced by the idea of Beschi to acknowledge the people's tongue. Hence, his *Tamil Handbook* was also named the 'Common Dialect of That Language'. The *Handbook*, similar to Beschi's first grammar, was also written to teach the Tamil language to foreigners who arrived in Madras or to teach English to the Tamil people. In the very introduction of this work, Pope contradicted Robert Caldwell in these words,

> The origin and affinity of the South Indian languages have been much discussed. On the (one) hand the more deeply they are studied the more close their affinity to Sanskrit be seen to be, and the more evident will it appear that they possess a primitive and very near

[49] Father Beschi had written the first Tamil grammar. The grammar was in Latin which was later translated into English. P. Constantio Iosepho Beschi, *Grammatica Latino-Tamulica: Ubi de Vulgari Tamulicae*, Tranquebar, 1728.

[50] George William Mahon, who translated a Latin grammar of Beschi for the Christian Knowledge Society of Madras provide a detail account of Beschi's life and work. He wrote: "Beschi was highly skilled as a linguist. In addition to Italian, his mother tongue, he had mastered Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Portuguese, Spanish and French; and of the Indian languages, he was learned in Sanscrit, Tamul, Telgoo, Hindostani and Persian" He further told us that Beschi adopted the fully the local traditions, habits, customs and costumes for preaching Christianity. Indeed, he assumed the name of Tatouva Poddar Swami and called himself 'Viramamuni'. George William Mahon, tr., *A Grammar of the Common Dialect of Tamul Language composed for the use of the Missionaries of the Society of Jesus by Constantius Joseph Beschi*, Christian Knowledge Society Press: Madras, 1848, Introduction.

[51] Trautmann, *Language and Nation*, pp. 110-11.

> relationship to the languages of Indo-European group. Yet they are certainly not mere Prâkrits, or corruption of Sanskrit. I have always supposed that their place was among the members of the last mentioned family, and that they were probably "disjecta membra" of a language cöeval with Sanskrit and having the same origin with it. They certainly contain many traces of a close connection with the Greek, the Gothic, the Persian and other languages of the same family, in points even where Sanskrit presents no parallel. On the other hand, Professor Rask, Mr. Norris and more recently Dr. Caldwell, have shewn that the original language of the nomadic tribes from whom the races of South India have sprung was probably what they term "Scythian," that is, a member of that group of tongues in which are included the "Finnish, Turkish, Mongolian, and Tungûsian families.[52]

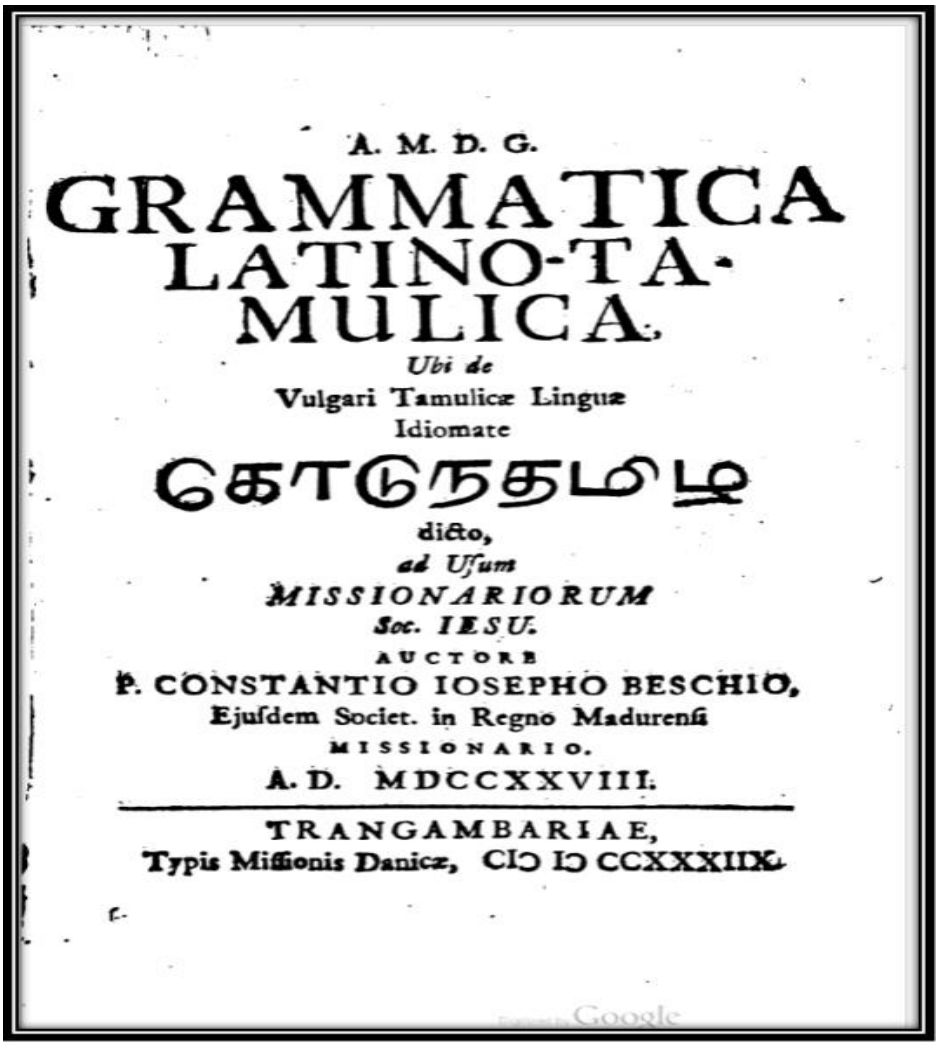
Although Pope challenged Indo-European linguists along with Robert Caldwell for believing a different origin of south Indian languages, he did not provide a comparative grammatical study for his claims. He assumed that the South Indian languages were also a dismembered part of an old ancestral language from which Sanskrit also derived. In this way, he assumed a sister connection between Sanskrit and the Dravidian languages. He also disagreed with the idea that the South Indian languages were part of a Scythian language family.[53] Caldwell utilized the method of comparative linguistics that evolved in Europe—but which Pope did not use—to elaborate his belief. G. U. Pope might be a great learner of the Tamil language and literature. He, indeed, emphasized on the historical and cultural connections between Sanskrit and Tamil but he did not extend his argument to propose a direct link between the Tamil and the Indo-European languages.

Linguists in Europe contend that there might be influences and interactions between two languages, but it does not necessarily imply a genetic linguistic relationship. It is important to note that G.U. Pope contributed significantly to raising awareness and appreciation for the study of the Tamil language and literature through his works. He published a comprehensive Tamil-English dictionary in 1888. His handbook as mentioned earlier was also a comprehensive guidebook for Tamil learners. Indeed, in recognition of his contributions Pope was offered a position of Professor at the University of Oxford after his return from India, where he taught Tamil. G.U. Pope, however,

[52] Pope, *A Tamil Handbook*, p.2 'Introduction'.

[53] The concept of a Scythian language family had been very strong in Europe since the eighteenth century. Later linguistic studies discredited this concept and the concept was abandoned altogether.

challenged the idea of the non-Sanskritic origin of the Dravidian language. Nonetheless, he appreciated Robert Caldwell for writing the *Comparative Grammar of the Drâvidian Languages* which 'throws great light upon every part of the subject'.[54] Robert Caldwell also expressed admiration for G.U. Pope in his Reminiscences. But at the same time wrote that the "chief drawback to his (Pope's) success was the severity of his discipline, which led, after a series of petty rebellions, to his withdrawal."[55]



A. M. D. G.

GRAMMATICA LATINO-TA-MULICA,

Ubi de

Vulgari Tamulicæ Linguæ Idiomate

கொடுந்தமிழ்

dicto,

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MISSIONARIORUM

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P. CONSTANTIO IOSEPHO BESCHIO,

Ejuſdem Societ. in Regno Madurenſi

MISSIONARIO.

A. D. MDCCXXVIII.

TRANGAMBARIAE,

Typis Miſſionis Danicæ, CIↃ IↃ CCXXXIIIX.

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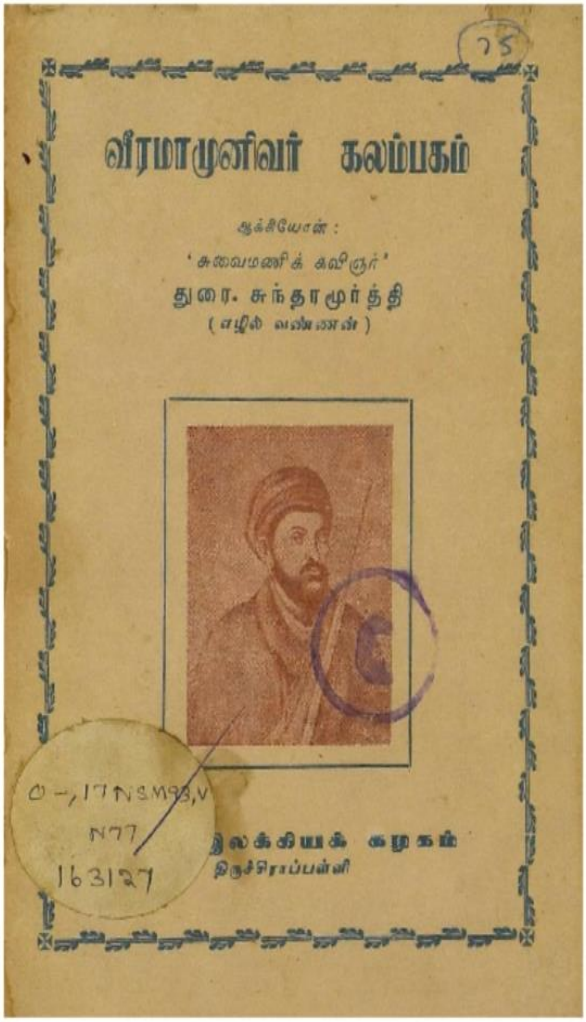
[54] Pope, *A Tamil Handbook,* p.4 'Introduction'.

[55] Caldwell wrote that "one of the greatest names in Tinnevelly Mission history, especially in connection with education is that of Dr. George Uglow Pope… He was a man of varied ability and accomplishment, and an enthusiastic teacher… He is now the Professor of Tamil in the University of Oxford. He was made a Fellow of the Madras University." See J. L. Wyatt, ed., *The Reminiscences of Bishop Caldwell,* Addison & Co: Madras, 1894, pp. 58-59.



Picture of Fr. Beschi in Veeramamunivar Kalambagam

A GRAMMAR

OF THE COMMON DIALECT OF THE TAMUL LANGUAGE,

CALLED

கொடுந்தமிழ்,

COMPOSED FOR THE USE OF THE MISSIONARIES
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS,

BY

CONSTANTIUS JOSEPH BESCHI,

MISSIONARY OF THE SAID SOCIETY IN THE DISTRICT OF MADURA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN BY

GEORGE WILLIAM MAHON, A. M.

GARRISON CHAPLAIN, FORT ST. GEORGE, MADRAS, AND
LATE FELLOW OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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OR

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OF THAT LANGUAGE,

ON THE PLAN OF

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The Reminiscences of Bishop Caldwell was edited and published after he died in 1894 by his son-in-law J. L. Wyatt, another missionary in Madras. The book, however, does not provide much information on the source of Caldwell's scholarly work on the Dravidian concept. Trautmann assumes that Caldwell did not properly acknowledge F.W. Ellis.[56] This is only partially correct. Caldwell in the first edition of his grammar commented, as Trautmann himself quotes,

> The first to break ground in the field was Mr. Ellis, a Madras civilian, who was profoundly versed in Tamil language and literature and whose interesting but very brief comparisons, not of grammatical forms, but only of some of the vocables of three Drâvidian dialects, is contained in his introduction to *Campbell's Grammar.*[57]

It is, indeed, true that Ellis broke ground as he envisaged the idea of the non-Sanskritic origin of the South Indian languages. But it is also right to argue that Ellis did not establish the Dravidian concept. Robert Caldwell, as we shall observe, based on a comprehensive study of comparative linguistics, which had evolved in Europe, established the concept. It must be noted that Caldwell was well aware of the progress of comparative linguistics in Europe including German studies. In the *Reminiscences*, Caldwell acknowledged the influence of German works. He wrote,

> From the time of my arrival in India, but especially from the time of my arrival at Tinnevelly, I set myself to the study of Indian Philology, Ethnology and History. I learnt German that I might be able to make use of the vast stores of Indian learning accumulated by German scholars.[58]

Robert Caldwell's *Comparative Grammar of Dravidian* was equal to the *Comparative Grammar of Indo-European* of Farnz Bopp in the scale of analysis and argument. In a way, he was the Bopp of Dravidian languages.

Emphasis on the contribution of Caldwell in the construction of the Dravidian concept must not be treated as a denial of the original contribution of F.W. Ellis and his colleagues. Ellis and his colleagues may have been the first philologers in South India who conceived the Dravidian idea. The 'Dravidian Proof' was present in the

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[56] Trautmann wrote: "Caldwell was not excessively generous in giving credit to his predecessors, and Ellis in particularly gets much less than his due in Caldwell's preface to the first edition." Trautmann, *Language and Nation*, p. 74.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Caldwell in Wyatt, ed., *The Reminiscences* p. 149.

'Introduction' of the 'Teloogoo Grammar' written by A.D. Campbell and in the 'Note to the Introduction' written by F.W. Ellis. Campbell wrote,

> In common with every other tongue, now spoken in India, modern Teloogoo abound with Sanscrit word, perhaps it has a greater proportion of them than any of the other southern dialects; nevertheless there is a reason to believe that the origin of two languages [Telugu and Sanskrit] is all together distinct.[59]

While Campbell also argued in favour of the 'Dravidian Proof', Ellis may have conceived it earlier than him. However, it is indeed surprising that Campbell did not give credit to Ellis for the concept even though he was a junior officer. On this issue, hence, further research is required. Trautmann does not inform us why Campbell did not mention the name of Ellis if the 'Dravidian Proof' was Ellis's idea. We, however, agree with the argument of Trautmann that Ellis and his colleagues, both Indian and English, together, at Fort St. George, first conceived the Dravidian idea. This finding does not, as we shall observe, diminish the role of Caldwell and his study of comparative grammar which has established the Dravidian concept with all its flavors. We believe too that the Dravidian concept originated through multiple studies. Hence, the contributions of various scholars—Beschi, Ellis, Campbell and Caldwell—all must be acknowledged. But, we shall now observe that the study of Caldwell was pivotal in the establishment of the Dravidian concept.

Robert Caldwell and the construction of the Dravidian concept

The Dravidian concept was well established by Robert Caldwell through his study of the grammar of various South Indian languages. He compared the grammars of these languages in his magnum opus, *A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages* and conceived the idea that they originated from 'a common

[59] Alexandar D. Campbel, *A Grammar of Teloogoo Language, Commonly Termed the Gentoo, Peculiar to the Hindoos Inhabiting the North Eastern Provinces of Indian Peninsula*, Fort St George College Press: Madras, 1816, Introduction.

descent'.[60] Caldwell followed the genealogical model of study developed in Europe in the study of the Indo-European language family. He wrote,

> The relationship [in the languages of South India] seems to me to be not merely morphological, but—in some shape or another, and however, it may be accounted for—genealogical. The genealogical method of investigation has produced remarkable results in the case of the Indo-European family of languages, and there seems no reason why it should be discarded in relation to any other family or group; but this method is applicable, as it appears to me, not merely to roots and forms, but also to principles, contrivances, and adaptations.[61]

Before entering, however, into the details of the comparative method Caldwell elaborated his objectives in the long introduction of about 120 pages.[62] He also identified approximately a dozen Dravidian languages.[63] Then he explained the reasons for adopting the term 'Dravidian' as a generic term. The reasons for adopting the term 'Dravidian' as a common generic term were quite articulative, explanatory and argumentative rather than evidentiary. First, he rejected the use of 'Tamulian' or 'Tamulic' for all southern languages, rather it ought to be reserved for the Tamil language only.[64] Second, A Sanskrit scholar of the late seventh century "Kumārila-bhaṭṭa, a controversial Brāhman writer of eminence," used the term "Āndhra-drāviḍa-bhāshā, 'the Telugu-Tamil language' or rather, perhaps, 'the language of Telugu and Tamil countries'" to designate the language family.[65] Caldwell preferred 'Dravidian' to denote the language family as it had been '….already used more or less distinctively by Sanskrit philologists,

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[60] J. L. Wyatt and T. Pillai, eds., *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages by the RT. Rev. Robert Caldwell, D.D., LL.D.* (Third and Revised Edition, University of Madras: Madras, 1956), Author's preface to the Second Edition, p. x.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Caldwell wrote: "It is the objective of the following work to examine and compare the grammatical principles and forms of various Dravidian languages, in the hope of contributing more knowledge of their primitive structure and distinctive character." However, we shall observe that his objectives were not merely linguistic study but also political. Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family*, p. 1.

[63] Caldwell listed twelve Dravidian languages – 6 cultivated and 6 uncultivated dialects as a member of a Dravidian family. These were; I) Cultivated Dialects: 1. Tamil, 2. Malayālam, 3. Telugu, 4. Canarese, 5. Tulu, 6. Kuḍagu or Coorg; II) Uncultivated Dialects: 1. Tuda, 2. Kōta, 3. Gōnd, 4. Khond or Ku, 5. Orān, 6. Rājmahāl. See Caldwell, ibid, p. 6.

[64] Caldwell wrote: "This family was at one time styled by European writer 'Tamulian' or 'Tamulic'; but as Tamil is the oldest and most highly cultivated member of the family, … It is desirable to reserve the terms 'Tamil' or 'Tamilian' (or as they used sometimes to be erroneously written 'Tamul' and 'Tamulian') to denote the Tamil language itself and the people by whom it is spoken." Caldwell, ibid, pp. 3-4

[65] Caldwell, ibid, p. 4.

as a generic appellation for the South Indian people and their language'.[66] It is now a well-argued fact that Robert Caldwell was antithetical to Brahmans and their hegemony over the people of South India for the interest of his missionary activities.[67] It was Cadwell, indeed, who introduced the categories of 'Brahman' and 'Non-Brahman' through his ethnographic study on the Shanar of Tirunelveli.[68] Despite his opposition and dislike for Brahmans, he acclaimed that Manu, the ancient sage, also used the term 'Dravidian' to 'denote the whole of south Indian tribes'.[69] Caldwell pointed out that modern philologists such as [John] Muir and Rājendra Lāl Mitra identified 'Drāviḍī' either as 'a *Vibhāshā*' or minor Prākrit', or the Prakrit often called '*Paiśāchi,* the language of *piśāchas*, or demons. He treated this as a sign of the non-Sanskritic origin of South Indian languages.[70] We can observe that these arguments are not very strong and the term 'Dravida' was also used as a synonym for 'Tamil' as accepted by Caldwell himself.[71] Nevertheless, Caldwell assigned completely new meanings to the term 'Dravidian', which was derived by him from the old word 'Dravida', and which later became historically very significant. It is evident in the *Comparative Grammar of Family of Dravidian* that Caldwell categorically rejected any possibility of the Sanskrit origin of Dravidian languages. He wrote,

> a Colebrooke, a Carey, and a Wilkins, the orientalists, though deeply learned in Sanskrit, and well acquainted with the idioms of Northern India, were unacquainted, or but very slightly acquainted, with the Dravidian languages. No person who has any acquaintance with the principles of comparative philology, and who has carefully studied the grammars and vocabularies of the Dravidian languages, and compared them with those of Sanskrit, can suppose the grammatical structures and inflexional forms of those languages and the greater number of their more important roots capable of being derived from Sanskrit by any process of development and corruption whatsoever.[72]

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[66] Ibid.

[67] See John Solomon, "Caldwell's Dravidians: Knowledge Production and the Representational strategies of missionary scholars in colonial South India" in *Modern Asian Studies*, Volume 56 (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1741-1773.

[68] Nicholas Dirk, "Recasting Tamil Society: the Politics of Caste and Race in Contemporary Southern India" in C. J. Fuller, ed., *Caste Today* (Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1996), p. 272.

[69] Caldwell, ibid, p. 4.

[70] Ibid, p. 5.

[71] Caldwell at another place accepted that the "Sanskrit name corresponding to Tamil is Drāviḍa, a word which denotes both the country inhabited by the people called Draviḍas and the language spoken by them; and I have come to the conclusion that the words *Tamiṛ* and *Draviḍa*, though they seem to differ a good deal, are identical in origin. See Caldwell, ibid, p. 8.

[72] Ibid, p. 42.

He provided five reasons in support of his thesis. These are: 1) the non-Sanskritic portion was in excess to the Sanskrit one in the Dravidian languages; 2) the pronouns, the numerals, the verbal and nominal inflexions and the syntactical arrangements of words were 'radically different from Sanskrit'; 3) the derivatives of Sanskrit words were 'never regarded by native scholars as of Dravidian origin'. Indeed, the true Dravidian words were 'placed by native grammarians in the different class with the epithets 'national words' or 'pure words''; 4) 'in the uncultivated languages of the Dravidian family', Sanskrit words were 'not at all but rarely, employed'; 5) "Of all evidences of identity or diversity of languages the most conclusive are those which are furnished by a comparison of their grammatical structure; and by such a comparison the independence of the Dravidian languages from Sanskrit will satisfactorily and conclusively be established."[73] Further, Caldwell listed thirteen broad grammatical differences between the Dravidian and Sanskrit languages.[74] The last point was further elaborated through the comparative study of grammars of various Dravidian languages.

We are not competent enough to evaluate the value of Caldwell's study of comparative grammar, as we lack training in comparative linguistics. But we can understand its historical value in the times when Europe was receptive to such ideas and comparative linguistics was being seen as a new science that provided a lot of insights into human history, ethnology and migration. Caldwell elaborated his arguments not only grammatically but on literary, cultural and political grounds as well. He acknowledged that Telugu, Canarese and Malayalam had heavily borrowed from Sanskrit and could not dispense it. Tamil, however, was the most cultivated language among the Dravidian and it could 'not only stand but flourish without a Sanskrit aid'.[75] Caldwell briefed us on the past literary writing tradition of Tamil that, the 'ancient or classical dialect of Tamil languages called Shen-Tamil or correct Tamil, in which nearly all the literature has been written, contained exceedingly little Sanskrit."[76] It shows that the Dravidian concept was established primarily on the basis of Tamil language, literature and grammar. Taking

[73] Ibid, pp. 43-48.
[74] Ibid, pp. 48-51.
[75] Ibid, p. 45.
[76] Ibid.

insights from Beschi and Ellis, Caldwell argued that the "speech of very lowest classes of people in the retired country districts accord to a considerable extent with the classical dialects in dispensing with Sanskrit derivatives."[77] We have read above that Beschi distinguished a 'common dialect' from the 'high Tamil'. Ellis and Campbell also believed in this thesis. Caldwell in the process of his missionary activities identified the differences in the language of Brahmans and common people. Perhaps with the objective of spreading his missionary message, he exaggerated this cleavage and strengthened the divide further. He argued that in the speech of the Brahmans, the learned Tamilians and in the written prose of Tamil, the 'largest infusion of Sanskrit' is found.[78] It is also evident that Caldwell was opposed to the Brahmans who carried Sanskrit with them from the North.[79] He depicted them as colonialists in South India.[80] With these ideas, he actually assumed a pristine stage of the Dravidian language which is older than Sanskrit in India. If that was true, as Caldwell argued, from where did the Dravidian languages originate? Caldwell answered this question on the basis of the available contemporary knowledge of language families. He wrote,

> the Dravidian languages evidently differ so considerably from the languages of the Indo-European family, and in particular from Sanskrit, that it can scarcely be doubted that they belong to a totally different family of tongues. They are neither derived from Sanskrit, nor are capable of being affiliated to it; and it can not have escaped the notice of the student that in every one of those particularly in which the grammatical structure of the Dravidian languages differs from Sanskrit, it agrees with the structure of Scythian languages, or the languages of Central and Northern India.[81]

We shall notice that while G.U. Pope failed to place the proper connection of Dravidian languages with the Indo-European family, Caldwell assumed that they might

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ulrike Schröder argues that "Aiming at the descriptions of the Shanars as objects of Christian mission work, Caldwell ascribed to them a distinct religion that was separated from the Brahmanical Hinduism." Ulrike Schröder, "No Religion but ritual? Robert Caldwell and the *Tinnevelly Shanars*" in Micheal Burgunder, Heiko Frese and Ulrike Schröder, eds., *Ritual, Caste, and Religion in Colonial South India* (Halle (Saale): Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2010), p. 132.

[80] He wrote: "Sanskrit, that it is improbable that it ever was the vernacular language of any district or country, whether in the north or in the south, is in every southern district read, and to some extent understood, by the Brāmans—the descendent of those Brahmanical colonists of early times whom the Dravidian appears to have been indebted to some extent for the higher arts of life and a considerable portion of their literary culture." Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family*, p. 2.

[81] Caldwell, ibid, p. 51.

be part of the Scythian family of languages. It was another reason for the scholarly success of the *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family*. Hence he also rejected those hypotheses which saw a 'remote original affinity between the Dravidian languages and Sanskrit, or rather those languages and the Indo-European family' based on 'some analogies in the grammar and in the vocabulary'. He, instead, argued that the analogies are due to borrowings from Sanskrit.[82] We can say that the Dravidian concept was constructed as contrary to Sanskrit primarily or in extension contrary to the Indo-European language family.

The discovery of Brahui has played a very significant role in the construction of a Dravidian concept. Robert Caldwell was the first scholar of southern languages who discovered some Dravidian elements in the language.[83] It was, however, in the Appendix where he mentioned 'Dravidian elements in Brahuī'. Caldwell wrote,

> in Brahuī, as in the Dravidian dialects, and whole of the Scythian tongue, the cases of nouns are denoted by postposition. The gender of nouns is expressed, not by their inflexions, but by prefixed separate words.[84]

He provided some other grammatical analogies and concluded that "this rule is more characteristic of Tamil than of other Dravidian idioms." Through these common elements, Caldwell argued that "the Brahuī appears to me to present traces of the existence of a distinctively Dravidian element."[85] We can observe that Brahuī was also seen grammatically close to the Scythian language family. This might be a reason for Caldwell's belief that the Dravidian languages might be older than the Scythian family of languages.[86] Interestingly, in deciding the affinities between Brahui and the Dravidian

[82] Caldwell, ibid, p. 42.

[83] Caldwell wrote in the introduction that "Brahuī, the language of mountaineers in the khanship of Kelat in Baluchistan, contains not only some Dravidian words, but a considerable infusion of distinctively Dravidian forms and idioms; in consequence of which this language has a better claim to be regarded as Dravidian." Caldwell, *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Family*, p. 39.

[84] Caldwell, ibid, (Appendix-7).

[85] Caldwell, ibid, p. 633.

[86] He wrote: "An ulterior and still more difficult question will be found to be occasionally discussed. It is this: Does there not seem to be reasons for regarding the Dravidian family of languages, not only as a link connection between the Indo-European and Scythian groups, but as the best surviving representative of a period in the history of human speech older than the Indo-European stage, older than the Scythian, and older than the separation of the one from the other?" Caldwell, ibid, Author's Second Preface, p. x.

languages, Franz Bopp's method was applied.[87] The discovery of Brahui also became a tool to presume the migration of the Dravidian people into India earlier than the Indo-European people. After the discovery of the Harappan civilization in the early twentieth century, migration theories gained momentum. Robert Caldwell had perhaps foretold the Dravidian migration theory or we can, in other words, say that he actually conceived a Dravidian migration theory before scholarly evidence was produced in support of it. He wrote,

> The Brahuī enable us to trace the Dravidian race beyond the Indus to the southern confines of Central Asia. …it evidently contains a Dravidian element; and the discovery of this Dravidian element in a language spoken beyond the Indus tends to show that the Dravidians, like the Aryans, the Græco-Scythians, and the Turco-Mongolians, must have entered India by the north-western route.[88]

On one hand, the argument was a justification of colonialism because it made Indians realise that every native of India arrived from somewhere. On the other hand, the argument established the antiquity of the Dravidian people over the people of north India who spoke the Indo-European languages. Nonetheless, the argument did not establish the nativity of the Dravidian people in India. It, therefore, deprived those claims that assigned Dravidians the status of original inhabitants of India. These claims were, later, more vehemently forwarded by the Dravidian movement of the twentieth century. Remarkably, Cadwell conceived some significant and original ideas in relation to the Dravidian concept.

Robert Caldwell raised many hypothetical questions and tried to answer them in a scholarly way. He asked if there was a Dravidian element in the vernacular languages of Northern India. To answer this query, he partly held the views of other scholars such as Dr Stevenson of Bombay and Mr Hodgson of Nepal, but partly modified them. He wrote: "It is admitted that before the arrival of Aryans, or Sanskrit speaking colony of Brāhmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaiśyas, the greater part of Northern India was peopled by rude aboriginal tribes, called by Sanskrit writers Dasyus, Nishādas, MĪechchas, & C; and

[87] Caldwell noted that "Bopp remarks that the three lowest numerals could never be introduced in any country by foreigners." He discovered four original numerals in the Brahui language which were similar to the Dravidian languages. Caldwell, ibid, p. 634.
[88] Caldwell, ibid, p. 40.

it is the received opinion that those aboriginal tribes were Scythian, or at least of non-Aryan, origin."[89] Caldwell, based on comparative linguistics, rejected Stevenson's idea that a non-Aryan element in Sanskrit was Dravidian. He wrote that the Dravidian, Scythian and non-Aryan could not be used interchangeably.[90] He did not agree to accept the idea that the term, for example, Śudra used in Sanskrit to denote non-Aryan people was used for Dravidian with the same meanings. He, hence opined that "I feel convinced that the Dravidian never had any relation with the primitive Aryans; and that if they, the Dravidians, were expelled from Northern India prior to the dawn of their civilization, the tribes that subdued and thrust them southward must have been pre-Aryans."[91] Caldwell, however, rejected that possibility as well. He argued: "I admit that there is a difficulty in supporting that the Dravidians, who have proved themselves superior to the Aryanised Śūdras of Northern India in mental power, independence, and patriotic feelings, should have been expelled from their original possessions by an irruption of those very Śūdras."[92] Through these analyses, Caldwell, on the one hand, induced the Southern people to feel proud, on the other hand, he visualized a sea route migration of the Dravidian people. Therefore, he argued that

> the Tamilians were never in possession of Āryā-varta, or Northern India at all; but they were connected with the Malay race, and came to Southern India by sea, from the opposite coast of the Bay of Bengal, or from Ceylon[93]

The discovery of Brahui, he argued, also suggested a similar pattern of migration. There was no wonder that the Dravidians entered India through the sea route as the British too entered India through that route. As a missionary, Caldwell believed in the means of peace and persuasion over conquest and coercion. He contended that the "introduction of the Dravidians within the pale of Hinduism appears to be originated, not in conquest, but in the peaceable process of colonisation."[94] Cadwell, though, believed in the presence of a Dravidian civilization prior to the arrival of Brahmans and the influence

[89] Caldwell, ibid, p. 53.
[90] Caldwell, ibid, p. 60.
[91] Caldwell, ibid, p. 107.
[92] Caldwell, ibid, p. 108.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Caldwell, ibid, p. 110.

of Sanskrit in South India. Hence, he stated that the "primitive Dravidians do not appear to have been by any means a barbarous and degraded people."[95]

Robert Caldwell, through his *Dravidian Comparative Grammar*, very cleverly, scholarly, comprehensively and conclusively constructed a picture of the Dravidian concept, as contrary to the Indo-Aryan, that successfully survived and influenced further studies. However, Beschi and Ellis were also important in the process of the making of a Dravidian concept while the effort and exercise of Robert Caldwell was historically most fruitful. It was so because it was embedded in the modern comparative linguistics. It was admired and accepted because it was based on a comprehensive study discussing various aspects of the identity—linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and national—of contemporary times.[96]

Robert Caldwell also determined the geography for the Dravidian languages. He wrote,

> The idioms which are included in this word under the general term 'Dravidian', constitute the vernacular speech of the great majority of the inhabitants of Southern India. With the exception of Orissa, and those districts of Western India and the Dekhan in which Gujarati and Marathi are spoken, the whole of the peninsular portion of India from the Vindhya mountains and the river Nerbudda (Narmada) to Cape Comorin (Kumari), is peopled, and from the earliest period appears to have been peopled, *by different branches of one and the same race* (emphasis added), speaking different dialects of one and the same language—the language to which the term 'Dravidian' is here applied.[97]

We must notice that while sketching the geography of the Dravidian languages, Caldwell identified Dravidian as a separate race as well. The study of Caldwell, like other studies of language families in Europe, especially the study of the Indo-European language family, was associated with the emerging idea of *race*.[98] Caldwell, while commenting on the unsuccessful implementation of the English language in the Madras Presidency and advocating the use of local dialects, also used the term race. He wrote,

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[95] Caldwell, ibid, p. 113.

[96] The idea of a separate ethnicity, if not race, was always there in the 'Dravidian Comparative Grammar'. Caldwell at various places used the term 'race' to suggest a different origin of the Dravidian people.

[97] Caldwell, ibid, pp. 1-2.

[98] Trautmann notes that "The new ethnology was led by the classification of languages…. Increasingly it was race that appeared to be the object of the ethnology of the Indo-European… The people who were the first speakers of the languages of the Indo-European language family had long since come to be called, by a name taken from Sanskrit, Arya (*arya*) or Aryan." Trautmann, *Aryans and the British India*, p. 2.

> Neither English, however, nor any other foreign tongue appears to have the slightest chance of becoming the vernacular speech of any portion of the inhabitants of Southern India. The indigenous Dravidian languages, which have maintained their ground for more than two thousand years against Sanskrit, the language of numerous, *powerful, and venerated sacerdotal race* (emphasis added), may be expected successfully to resist the encroachments of every other tongue.[99]

At various places, Caldwell used the term 'race' or 'Aryan race' for the North Indian people as well.[100] The use of the term 'race' by Robert Caldwell was not anyway extraordinary but accustomed to the emerging scholarly trends in Europe. Nicholas Dirk argues that,

> Caldwell's articulation for the racial and historical basis of the Aryan-Dravidian divide was perhaps the first European valorisation of the Dravidian category cast specially in racial terms, although he was following conventional wisdom in his uncritical acceptance of an Aryan theory of race.[101]

We are ready to accept that perhaps Caldwell's Dravidian concept was not drafted on the clear basis of racial theories and the term race was used conventionally. But, we shall also emphasize that the term supplied specific meanings from the mid-nineteenth century. The term was also embedded in the linguistic-ethnology studies in Europe.

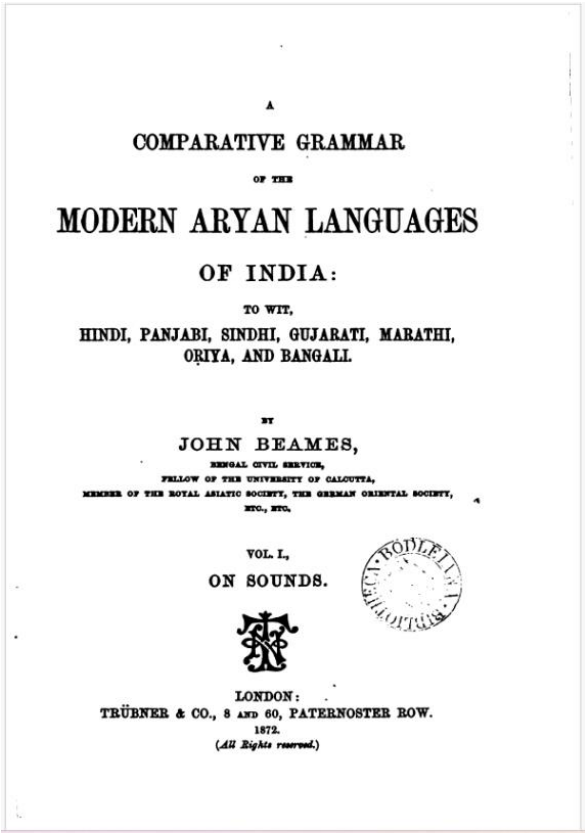
The comparative grammar of Indo-Aryan and the construction of Dravidian identity

It was not only the *Dravidian Comparative Grammar* of Robert Caldwell but also the *Indo-Aryan Comparative Grammar* written by John Beames that was instrumental in the construction of a Dravidian concept linguistically. The term Indo-Aryan was used to identify the modern languages of North India. It was proposed by German scholars that the Indian languages originated from an Indo-Iranian offshoot of the Indo-European, which they started calling the Indo-German family of languages. The linguistic tree prepared by August Schleicher evidently envisioned this idea. The idea of writing a comparative grammar of the Indo-Aryan, that is, the modern languages of North India,

[99] Caldwell, ibid, p. 3.
[100] Caldwell, ibid, "Sanskrit-speaking race", p. 51; "Aryan race", p. 109.
[101] Nicholas Dirk, "Recasting Tamil Society", p. 272.

arrived in the mind of a civil servant, John Beames when he first saw Caldwell's Grammar. Beames wrote, in the preface of his comparative grammar,

> It was, I think, in 1865 that I first saw *Dr. Caldwell's Grammar of the Dravidian Languages*, and it immediately occurred to me that a similar book was much wanted for the Aryan group. It was evident that no scholar in Europe could do the work. [102]



A

COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR

OF THE

MODERN ARYAN LANGUAGES

OF INDIA:

TO WIT,

HINDI, PANJABI, SINDHI, GUJARATI, MARATHI, ORIYA, AND BANGALI.

BY

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1872.

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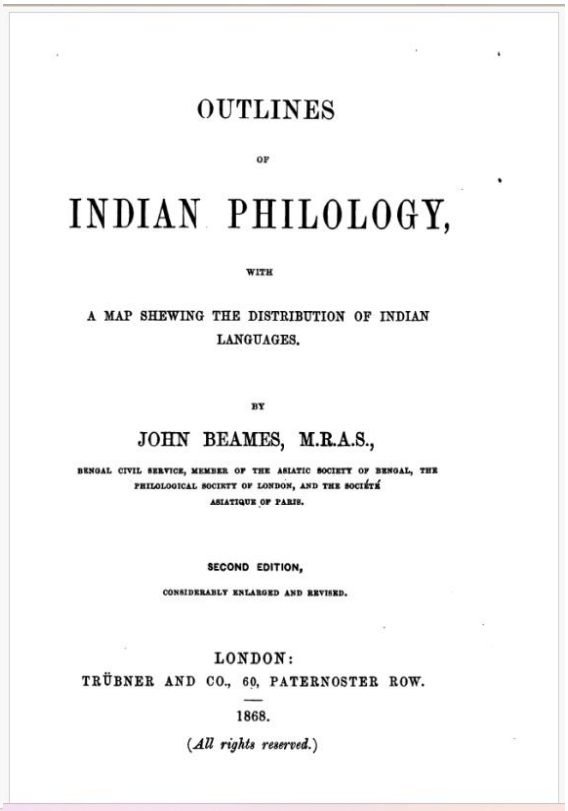

OUTLINES

OF

INDIAN PHILOLOGY,

WITH

A MAP SHEWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN LANGUAGES.

BY

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LONDON:

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1868.

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[102] John Beames, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Indian Languages of India* (Trübner and Co.: London, 1872), Preface, pp. vii-viii.

Christopher Cooke noted in the *Memoir of a Bengal Civilian* that John Beames' work *Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India* was published in three volumes between 1872 and 1879, and was preceded by his *Outlines of Indian Philology* in 1867, which was described as 'the first attempt to prepare a scientific general account of all the languages then known to be spoken in India', and which, though now, of course, largely out of date, has recently been translated in Urdu in Lucknow.[103]

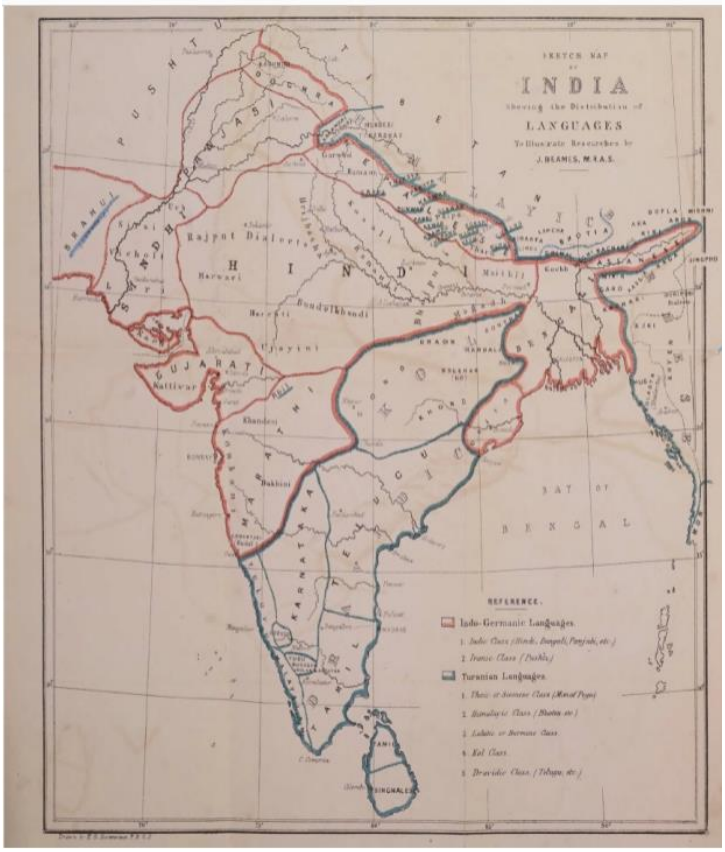

Fig: *The John Beames's Map*

[103] Christopher Cooke, who was the son of Beames' youngest daughter, was also in the Indian Civil Services till 1947. He was instrumental in republishing the Memoirs of Beames after Indian independence to preserve the family memory of John Beames. The 'Memoirs' was first published by the Chatto and Windus in 1865. Cooke in John Beames, *Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian* (London: Eland, 1984), pp. 348.

Courtesy: Outlines to Indian Philology

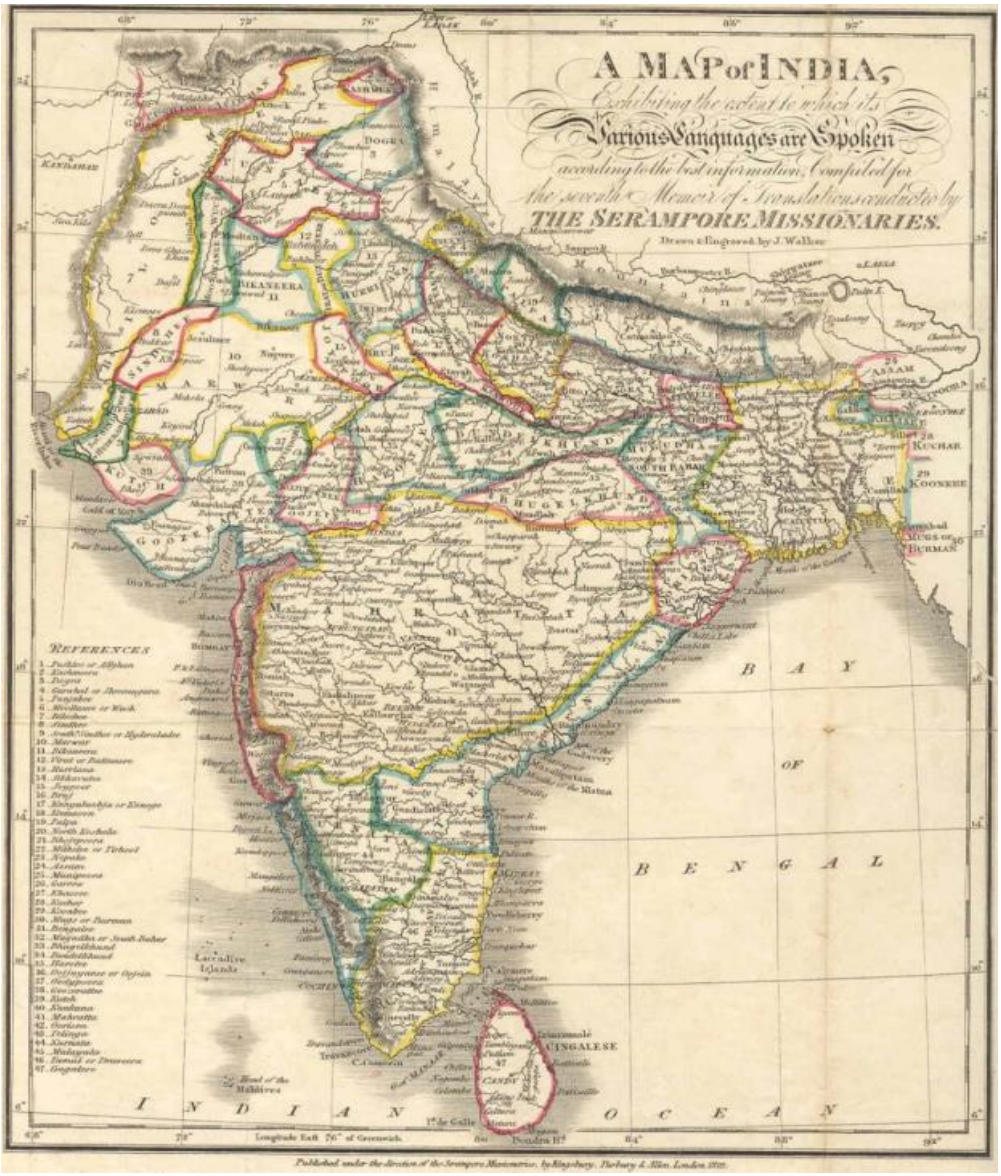

Fig: *The Serampore Missionary Map*
Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

Interestingly, Beames was as much influenced by the work of Caldwell that even before writing the *Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages*, he prepared a linguistic map, based on the separation of the two linguistic families—the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan. He accepted that he found Caldwell's *Grammar* in 1865. Immediately he adopted

the idea and prepared the map and published it in a book titled *Outlines of Indian Philology* which was ready for publication in 1867. This linguistic map is important in the history of the development of linguistic cartography in India. This is the second important linguistic map of India. The first language map was produced by the Serampore missionary in 1822. However, the idea of the Indo-European language family was already firmly established by Franz Bopp in 1816. The Serampore missionary map did not depict any language family. It was, indeed, wedded with the languages identified as the spoken languages of India. The objective of the Serampore missionary was limited to identifying spoken languages and translating the Bible into those languages. Hence, there was no need to mention the emerging knowledge of comparative linguistics in the map. Beames's objective was, however, different. He wanted to establish himself as one of the best philologers of his times. Therefore, on the map, he visualised the latest knowledge of linguistics. He was also in a hurry to become the first to prepare and introduce the map in the book which was ready for publication. He did not wait to publish it in the *Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages* however, he conceived an idea to do such work.

In the map, India was divided into two linguistic families, namely the 'Indo-Germanic' and the 'Turanian'. Later in the book *Comparative Grammar*, Beames used the term 'Modern Aryan' instead of Indo-Germanic. On the map however, he used the term 'Indo-Germanic' for north Indian languages. We know that German scholars took the lead in philological studies and used the term Indo-Germanic languages to denote Indo-European languages. Beames, in a hurry, did not realize the political meanings and controversies over the use of terms.[104] Beames also used the term 'Turanian' for the languages of South India. Before the publication of the work of Caldwell the languages of South Indian were often believed to be part of the Turanian family.[105] Beames,

[104] Trautmann wrote that 'German philologist preferred "Indo-Germanic," devised by Heinrich Klaproth in 1823, but non-Germans resisted. The English linguist Arthur Young proposed Indo-European as early as 1813. See Trautmann, *Aryan and British India*, p. 13.

[105] The idea of 'Turanian language family' was conceived by Max Muller. It was primarily used for the non-Aryan languages of Central Asia. Contrary to the Aryan language family people, who were agriculturalists, the speakers of the Turanian family were believed to be nomads by Max Muller. Later non-Aryan languages of India – Dravidian, Munda, Tibeto-Burman and Malayo-Polynesian etc. were included in the Turanian family. In the 20th century, this idea was categorically rejected by linguistic scholars.

however, saw Caldwell's book in 1865 but he did not bother to use the Dravidian word, maybe due to paucity of time or maybe due to ignorance. Till 1867, perhaps Beames had not read Caldwell's work. The linguistic map was also not prepared based on best cartographic practices. He separated the area of Telugu language from the area of Tamil language with a straight line. The line was perhaps copied from the Serampore missionary map. In the map, as an innovation, Beames used a scheme of big font-capital letters for languages and small font-small letters for dialects. In the *Outlines of Philology*, he prepared some rules to define languages and dialects. These are very interesting observations.[106] This scheme of big and small fonts later became a trend in linguistic maps. The most important feature of the map was the use of two different colours for the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian family. Interestingly, Beames used red colour for the Indo-Aryan and blue for the Dravidian language family. Beames' literature provides no clue for such use.

Beames started writing *A Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages of India*in 1866 and published it in three consecutive volumes from 1872 to 1879. This was the work in which, Beames identified seven modern Indian languages that sprung from Sanskrit.[107] He described them as sisters. Interestingly, at the time of writing the *Comparative Grammar*, Beames was not conversant with every North Indian language but had a working knowledge only.[108] It shows that comparative linguistics became very popular till the mid-nineteenth century in India and Europe. The genealogical theory of the origin and evolution of languages became a powerful concept in comparative linguistics. Beames introduced this idea of genealogical evolution into the origin of Modern Hindi. He wrote,

> Let it there be granted as a fact sufficiently proved in the following pages that the spoken Sanskrit is the fountain from which the languages of Aryan India originally sprung. Whatever may be the opinions held as to the subsequent influences which they

[106] For detail see John Beames, *Outlines of Indian Philology*, Trübner and Co.: London, 2nd Edition, 1868, pp. 52-75.
[107] These seven languages were Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya and Bengali respectively.
[108] Beames wrote that "A residence of upwards of twelve years in India, during which I have held the official posts in the Punjab, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and have made long visits to various parts of Hindustan Proper (the North-western Provinces) has rendered me familiar with Panjabi, Hindi, Bengali and Oriya, all of which at different times, I had to speak, read and write. The western languages, Marathi, Sindhi and Gujarati, I only know from books." Beames, *A Comparative Grammar*, p. viii-ix.

> underwent, no doubt can fairly be cast on the fundamental proposition. Sanskrit is to the Hindi and its brethren, what Latin is to Italian and Spanish.[109]

It must be noted that in the tussle between Hindi and Hindustani, Beames took the side of Hindustani. Nevertheless, his study of comparative linguistics tended him towards the side of Hindi. However, he was also a player in the Bengali-Oriya controversy. He took the side of the Oriya language and became revered as the 'Saviour of Odia language'.[110] Beames argued on the basis of philological knowledge that Oriya was a separate and older language than Bengali. He rejected Bengali intellectuals' claims that Oriya was simply a dialect of Bengali. Beames' arguments in favour of Oriya, as a separate language, were given importance as those were also based on the emerging knowledge of comparative linguistics.

In the *Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan,* Beames discussed a category of words in the Modern Aryan languages, which were neither Sanskrtitic nor Aryan in their origin. Beames found these words of the Dravidian origin. He wrote that 'bulk of them could have come into frequent and close contact with the Dravidians'.[111] But contrary to Caldwell, he believed that "the Aryans were superior morally as well as physically to the aborigines, and probably therefore imparted to them more than they received from them." In the process of proving this thesis linguistically, Beames argued that,

> Aryans were in possession of a copious language before they came into India; they would therefore not be likely to borrow words of an ordinary usual description, such as names of their clothing, weapons, and utensils, or for their cattle and tools, or for their part of bodies, or for the various relations in which they stood to each other. The words they

[109] Beames, *A Comparative Grammar*, p. 2.

[110] Jagannath Mohanti argues that "Although John Beames is no longer remembered as an administrator, he will be ever remembered as an architect, as a saviour of Odia language. It is rightly said that language politics was a significant driving force for the emergence of regional consciousness in the late 19th century. At that time the use of vernacular language was given importance for acquisition of secular power in British India particularly in Odisha. In 1867 Rangalal Bandopadhyay, Deputy Magistrate spoke out in a public meeting that the primacy of Bengali over Oriya. Similarly, an eminent Bengali scholar Rajendra Lal Mitra declared that there was no need to have a separate language for mere 20 lakh of Oriya people. Even Mitra pleaded that Odisha was doomed to remain backward if it had a separate language. Likewise, Pandit Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya of Balasore Zilla School published pamphlet "Oriya is not a separate language". Jagannath Mohanti, "John Beames, a Foreign Architect of Modern Oriya (Odia) Language" in Lenin Mohanti, Ed., *Odisha Review,* Vol. LXX No. 4, November 2013.

[111] Beames, *A Comparative Grammar*, p. 11.

> would be likely to borrow would be names for the new plants, animals, and natural objects which they had not seen in their former abode.[112]

It is seen that linguists in India subscribed to the ideas that originated in Europe. Beames also used the Leibniz method in deciding the origin of non-Sanskrit words of Modern Indo-Aryan languages. This method was well-tested and used by most scholars. He, however, through comparative linguistics, painted a picture of deprived, defeated, conquered, and inferior Dravidians as compared to Aryans who were represented as victors. These images of the South Indian people and their languages, however, constructed through comparative linguistics, influenced further studies. They also constructed powerful political and cultural identities in India.

Epilogue

We must acknowledge that as soon as the Dravidian concept emerged, based on the comparative linguistic study of Robert Caldwell, it was passionately admired in the so-called Bengal School of Orientalism. The studies in Calcutta and the studies in Madras were not contrary to each other but complementary. Therefore, the belief that the two schools operated differently would be an opaque idea. It is also sometimes suggested that British Orientalism was different from German or French Orientalism. The above study shows that British scholars in India and German scholars in Europe were almost moving in the same direction in the development of comparative linguistics. Indian studies influenced European scholars and European studies influenced scholars in India.

We must also note that the structure of comparative linguistics was developed in Europe in the early modern period. The idea of language family, a genealogical idea of the origin of languages, and the idea to depict language with their region on a map was developed in Europe. When the language data, gathered from the Orient, was put into these structures new concepts and theories emerged. In this way, the idea of the Indo-Aryan and the idea of the Dravidian language family arrived. These new ideas or the newly constructed knowledge of the Orient transformed the way of thinking in the colonized country.

[112] Beames, *A Comparative Grammar*, pp. 10-11.

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