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**Medicine, alchemy, and yoga in the Tamil Siddha literature,  
with a special reference to the text *Vaittiya Kallāṭam***

**SUMMARY**

The main aim of my dissertation is to prepare a study of the text *Vaittiya Kallāṭam* along with a translation of large fragments of this work from Tamil to Polish. The text is often attributed to an author named Yākōpu alias Rāmatēvar (17th-18th c.). It concerns medicine, alchemy and yoga taught and practiced by the siddhars (*cittar*), i.e. the members of the South Indian Tamil siddha tradition (*citta pārampariyam*). *Vaittiya Kallāṭam* consists of three chapters devoted to the three areas of traditional knowledge mentioned above, i.e. the chapter entitled *Vaittiya Kāṇṭam* (*Medical chapter*), which has been provided with a glossary and an explanatory commentary, *Vakāra kāṇṭam* (*Alchemical chapter*) and *Ñāṇa kāṇṭam* (*Chapter on [yogic] knowledge*). Each of the three chapters contains fragments composed in a certain kind of esoteric, ambiguous language.

Another goal of my dissertation is to outline the cultural background of the text under study, i.e. the area of the Tamil medical, alchemical and yogic tradition, taking as a foundation an interpretation of the content of the three chapters of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*, as well as other representative works of Tamil siddha authors, such as Yākōpu, Pōkar and Tirumūlar.

In my dissertation I attempt to answer the question about the functions of esoteric language in *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*, especially in its medical chapter. Each of the three parts of the text differs in terms of the ways of constructing an esoteric text, using for this purpose i.a. various forms of word puzzles, ambiguous technical vocabulary, metaphors, symbols, etc., which is related to the specificity of the individual areas of traditional knowledge, i.e. medicine, alchemy and yoga. In my research I try to verify the research hypothesis that esoteric language in the medical chapter has not only a protective role, but it also performs several other functions, among which the integration of local medicine with the sciences of liberation, presented in the yogic and alchemical chapter, is remarkable. *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*, using a secret language, presents medical science as a part of the traditional sciences of liberation, fulfilling an integrating function for the local cultural ecosystem.

In the dissertation, I also attempt to verify the hypothesis that the three domains of knowledge, i.e. medicine, alchemy and yoga, are seen in the Tamil siddha tradition as interconnected integral elements of the system of sciences leading to liberation. In this regard, I examine the fluidity of boundaries between the three areas of traditional siddha knowledge presented in *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*.

The analysis of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam* in the dissertation focuses to a large extent on the study of the form and strategy of creating the secrecy in the text. In other words, I examine the ways of constructing an enigmatic discourse for the transfer of knowledge related to the three traditional branches of science, which were used in the three parts of the work devoted to medicine, alchemy, and yoga, respectively. I also study the functional aspect of the strategies of obscuring the meanings, i.e. the role they can fulfill in the text. I also attempted to interpret the work on the basis of available research tools.

The hybrid, specific character of the studied literature and the wide thematic scope of the dissertation are related to the concepts inscribed in the cultural theory of literature, such as the transdisciplinary approach, related to crossing or even "removing" the boundaries between disciplines, and methodological pluralism, i.e. the use of various analytical techniques and methods of interpretation, useful at a given moment of research. In my work, transdisciplinarity is related to blurring the boundaries between research on literature and the culture in which the source texts for the dissertation function. The interpretation and analysis of the text is combined with the reflection on the local culture; the study of culture, on the other hand, enables the interpretation and translation of the text. In addition to the philological analysis of the texts, thanks to research trips to South India, I conducted my own field research, i.e. observations, consultations and interviews with traditional contemporary siddha medics, which helped me to interpret the text and complement the philological research presented in the dissertation. The interpretation and analysis of the text combines with the reflection on the local culture; the study of culture, on the other hand, enables the interpretation and translation of the text. Such a holistic approach enables the preparation of a more complete study of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*, which may contribute to future research, both philological and related to social sciences. The transdisciplinary character of the dissertation is also related to the analysis of a secret discourse, largely involving the analysis of riddles, which is situated on the border between linguistics and literary studies. Methodological pluralism, on the other hand, involves the use of various methods for the study and interpretation of various fragments of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*, depending on the specificity of a given part of the text.

The first chapter of the dissertation presents an introduction to the Tamil siddha tradition and literature. I present an explanation of the term *siddhar* and the classifications of the currents of the Tamil siddha tradition and its literature proposed by the researchers. This chapter also gives general information on the *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*. I discuss the controversial authorship of this work, present its structure, and provide a brief list of the content of all three chapters of the book. The final part of Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the phenomenon of the esoteric language in the Tamil siddha tradition.

Chapter 2 is an introduction to the medical chapter of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*. I describe the characteristics of the enigmatic language of the chapter *Vaittiya Kāṇṭam* and discuss its possible functions. The second part of Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the Tamil siddha medicine, which is the subject of *Vaittiya Kāṇṭam*. I present the basic principles and practices of the Tamil siddha medicine, referring also to the wider literature of the tradition. I also refer to the theory of ayurvedic medicine (skt. *āyurveda*), the allusions to which appear in the texts of the siddhars.

In Chapter 3, I present the Polish translation of excerpts from the chapter *Vaittiya Kāṇṭam*, as well as their interpretation and explanations. I discuss in detail the esoteric discourse used in the text.

Chapter 4 is an introduction to siddha alchemy, mainly based on the alchemical works of siddhar Yākōpu. I outline the basic alchemical principles and practices that the Tamil siddha texts refer to. I also refer to the theory of *rasāyana*, i.e. another alchemical tradition originating in India, the allusions to which also appear in the alchemical works of the siddhars. I consider the relationship between alchemy and yoga, and between alchemy and medicine, as it is manifested in *Vaittiya Kallāṭam* and other Tamil siddha texts. The second part of Chapter 4 is an introduction to the chapter *Vakāra Kāṇṭam*. I discuss the features of esoteric language and its possible functions in the alchemical chapter of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*.

Chapter 5 presents a translation of selected stanzas from the chapter *Vakāra Kāṇṭam* along with their interpretations. I analyze the means, by which the text acquires an esoteric character.

Chapter 6 is an introduction to yoga of the siddhars. I describe the yogic practices and principles referred to in the last chapter of *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*. I also discuss the character and the functions of an esoteric discourse in the chapter *Ñāṇa Kāṇṭam*.

Chapter 7 presents a translation of the chapter *Ñāṇa Kāṇṭam* and its interpretation. I analyze the methods of building an esoteric text used in the yogic chapter of the work *Vaittiya Kallāṭam*.

In the final chapter, I present a summary and the conclusions from the analysis presented in the previous chapters of the dissertation.

Additionally, the dissertation has been supplemented with two annexes. Annex 1 provides a list of the Tamil names of chemical substances and minerals appearing in the dissertation, as well as their Polish equivalents, along with the chemical formulae.

Annex 2 presents photos which I have taken during my fieldwork in South India, showing several stages of the preparation of the "mercurial gem" (*racamaṇi*), i.e. a bead described in alchemical siddha texts, made of mercury and attributed with extraordinary powers by the siddhars.

To my knowledge, the dissertation is the first work on the Tamil siddha literature and tradition in Polish. It also provides the first translation of excerpts from *Vaittiya Kallāṭam* from Tamil into another language, and the first Polish translation of longer excerpts from the text of the Tamil Siddha tradition.