

Mapping French - Tamil Transl(oc)ations

This article tries to focus on the significant moments in French-Tamil translations/transactions with a view to highlighting the two following arguments: 1. Unlike the translation activities in the British Indian territories, the translations in the French Indian territories were not strictly guided by the policy of the colonial government and remain voluntary. 2. Since a major amount of translation of French works into Tamil was done through English, this translation history raises questions relating to the a) nature of choice, b) mode of translation, c) complex relation between the source language (French) and mediating language (English) and the target language (Tamil). Here the 'function' of translation becomes more important than the 'correctness' and 'ethics' of translation. The article also touches upon the role of Tamils outside the Tamil region in the history of transactions between French and Tamil. To sustain these intertwined arguments, it follows a chronological pattern, tracing the function of French-Tamil translation from the times of French Orientalism through the rise of nationalism, modernism, and the activist mo(ve)ments of the postcolonial present before concluding that the postcolonial debate on India is most often guided by a critique of British colonialism and fails to capture the nuances of French colonialism.

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