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Please register at history@sai.uni-heidelberg.de

Patronage, Literature, and Social Change in the Early Modern Tamil World

by

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Patronage has played a central role in Tamil literary culture for many centuries. The generous support provided by elite benefactors encouraged the development of a professional class of poets. More importantly, patronage provided the actual *raison d'être* for Tamil literature itself, as one of the prime function of poems was to extol the munificence and benevolence of their patrons. While the role of literature in the social life of Tamil communities is well known, literary patronage has not been studied in any great detail beyond individual cases. My aim in this presentation is to trace the connection between literary patronage and wider economic, social, and political transformations by using the corpus of Islamic literature in Tamil as an example to offer insights into the social and cultural history of the Tamil-speaking regions between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.