

CONTRIBUTION OF TAMIL THOUGHTS AND IDEOLOGY TO AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH EAST ASIA: A REVIEW

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Abstract. This study critically examines the contribution of Tamil thought and ideology to the development, sustainability, and transformation of agricultural systems in Southeast Asia. Moving beyond technocratic interpretations of agriculture, the paper situates Tamil agrarian influence within a broader ideological framework encompassing land stewardship, ethical labour relations, communal responsibility, environmental ethics, and knowledge transmission across generations. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical analysis, ideological interpretation, and regional case studies, the study demonstrates how Tamil migration and diasporic networks functioned as conduits for agricultural knowledge exchange across maritime Southeast Asia. Tamil philosophies related to land custodianship, tenant rights, collective labour, and ecological harmony shaped not only farming techniques, such as irrigation management, crop diversification, and seasonal calendars; but also social institutions governing agricultural practice. The findings reveal that Tamil agricultural influence was neither uniform nor hegemonic; rather, it was adaptive, relational, and mediated by local political economies, colonial governance structures, caste and kinship systems, and market transformations. Importantly, the study challenges dominant narratives that reduce agricultural diffusion to material technologies alone, arguing instead that ideological worldviews play a decisive role in shaping sustainable rural development. By foregrounding Tamil thought as a living system of agrarian ethics rather than a static historical artifact, the paper underscores its contemporary relevance to debates on food security, agroecology, climate resilience, and inclusive rural policy. Ultimately, the research positions Tamil agricultural ideology as a valuable intellectual and cultural resource for rethinking sustainable agriculture in Southeast Asia, particularly in contexts marked by environmental stress, social inequality, and the marginalisation of smallholder farming communities.

Keywords: *Tamil thought, agricultural ideology, Southeast Asia, sustainability, diaspora*

Introduction

Previous scholarly works have conducted an extensive and thorough exploration, indicating that Tamil thought and ideology significantly contribute to the essential field of agriculture and the overall development of rural areas across the vast, diverse landscapes found throughout South-East Asia, a region rich in cultural and agricultural heritage. Within this broad context, one of the essential hypotheses that has been formulated asserts that these vital contributions are intricately related not only to the extensive and rich agricultural knowledge that has been meticulously accumulated over countless generations but also to a variety of deeply rooted ideas associated with critical and foundational concepts of land, labor, and community dynamics. These crucial ideas fundamentally shape how this vast body of agricultural knowledge is transmitted through various communities and how diverse, innovative, as well as sustainable

farming systems are established, maintained, and robustly supported over the passage of time. This entire process is incredibly pivotal in shaping the agricultural landscape in significant and far-reaching ways that extend well beyond mere immediate productivity measures and economic gains. Particularly crucial are those Tamil ideologies that emphasize the utmost importance of land stewardship, the inherent rights of tenant-farmers, the alleviation of burdensome debt, social responsibility toward communal well-being, and the rich, vibrant traditions that are encapsulated within agrarian art and practices. These ideologies play pivotal roles in enhancing agricultural productivity, mitigating a wide panorama of risk factors, and facilitating the overall adoption of innovative practices and techniques that are deemed absolutely vital for achieving sustainable agricultural growth over the long haul, ensuring food security and resilience in rural communities. In stark contrast, other prevailing ideologies often serve to promote knowledge suppression, thereby maintaining inequitable and unjust land tenure systems that severely undermine the well-being of the farming communities involved, particularly those most vulnerable. Such ideologies perpetuate exploitative dead-rent contracts that disproportionately affect the most at-risk members of society, including small-time farmers and marginalized groups who are often regarded as the backbone of agricultural efforts. These detrimental practices effectively deter the dissemination of valuable information and stifle the practice of essential agricultural arts that are necessary for the achievement of sustainable development goals, particularly in rural areas that heavily rely on such knowledge for their very survival and prosperity. Furthermore, extensive Tamil diasporas have long settled across South-East Asia since ancient times, creating a rich and nuanced tapestry of cultural exchanges and interactions that have further enriched and diversified the agricultural practices found throughout the region and its farming communities.

This complex cultural exchange fosters a significant interplay of traditions, beliefs, and innovations that continue to evolve and adapt over generations, leading to a dynamic and resilient agricultural landscape that reflects a remarkable blend of diverse ideas, methodologies, and techniques that further enhance sustainability. The historical exchanges of agricultural knowledge between Tamil Nadu and various regions of South-East Asia intersect profoundly with the broader dissemination of Tamil thought and ideology as a whole, highlighting a long-standing and intricate relationship that continues to adapt resiliently to new challenges as they arise, thus shaping contemporary agricultural practices in profoundly significant ways that are crucial for the survival and prosperity of many communities across different contexts. Although agriculture in Tamil Nadu itself has evolved considerably over time, with the introduction of new techniques and crops that have been effectively adapted to current environmental conditions and market demands, many of the ideological tenets originally established have remarkably persisted, surviving the test of time. These fundamental principles continue to exert a strong influence in guiding agricultural practices today, proving their resilience and ongoing relevance across various contexts and environments, even amidst emerging challenges posed by globalization, climate change, and the shifting landscapes of rural economies. These enduring influences are particularly significant in contemporary times because they encompass and uphold fundamental principles of agrarian stewardship, pro-poor development approaches that prioritize both equity and fairness in resource allocation, and a broad commitment to environmental sustainability and resilience. Such principles effectively align seamlessly with current international policy objectives aimed at fostering agricultural growth and

rural development in a balanced and genuinely inclusive manner, ensuring that no one is left behind. The remarkable legacy of Tamil thought, characterized by its unparalleled cultural richness and profound implications for agriculture, continues to resonate strongly across regions and cultures alike. It provides vital insights and robust frameworks that can effectively guide future agricultural practices and rural development initiatives, ensuring a sustainable approach that greatly benefits both the environment and the local communities that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, food security, and overall well-being, fostering a sense of identity and continuity.

In a rapidly changing world that increasingly demands innovative solutions to longstanding challenges, this enduring legacy and ideological richness stands as a beacon of sustainable and equitable progression in the agricultural sector. It emphasizes the essential importance of cultural heritage in shaping a resilient and promising future, where traditional wisdom meets modern innovations. Each of these crucial aspects intricately weaves together to create a compelling narrative that underscores the vital role of Tamil ideologies and agricultural practices in enhancing not only food production but also community well-being and cultural continuity across generations. This ultimately contributes to the creation of a sustainable and prosperous agricultural future for all stakeholders involved, ensuring that agriculture remains a cornerstone of human development and community resilience, thereby facilitating the long-lasting growth and flourishing of holistic and well-rounded farming communities. In conclusion, the interplay of Tamil ideologies within agriculture serves as a key driver of positive change, helping to forge pathways that lead toward interconnectedness, understanding, and cooperative endeavors that elevate the status of agriculture not only as a mere economic activity but as a fundamental cornerstone of social structure, identity, and cultural heritage. The ongoing relevance of these ideologies extends to contemporary discussions about sustainability, social justice, and ecological balance, reinforcing the notion that true agricultural advancement must consider and cherish the collective wisdom and heritage that have been passed down through generations. (Chambers, 2019)

This comprehensive analysis documents how Tamil thought and ideology, disseminated through historical diffusion, intellectual exchange, and adaptive practice, inform agriculture in South-East Asia. A variety of sources trace agricultural-migration patterns from Tamil Nadu to the region, identify elements of Tamil philosophy that influence land, labour, and technology among agriculturalists, and examine transmission through corresponding practices and supplementary parameters such as caste, kinship, and patronage, which condition access to resources. Exploration of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka's erstwhile trade links with South-East Asia reveals further avenues of Tamil thought and ideology. Historical accounts, authorship data, and practitioner interviews, including recollections by estates-trained agronomists, substantiate these interdependencies and provide a basis for further inquiry into the impact of regional dyads.

Results and Discussion

Reliable evidence indicates that Tamil thought and ideology, through historical diffusion, knowledge exchanges, and adaptive practices, inform agricultural systems across thousands of kilometres in Southeast Asia. The present study employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, formal,

evidence-based analysis, and a diversity of primary and secondary sources. Five core components structure the analytic framework: (1) historical background establishes the relevance of Tamil migration, diaspora, and agricultural knowledge exchanges for contemporary Southeast Asia; (2) ideological foundations delineate core concepts in Tamil philosophy related to land, tenure, labour, and agrarian ethics, and link these ideas to religious, textual, and customary sources; (3) agricultural knowledge transmission investigates the techniques, crop systems, and innovations transmitted from the Tamil diaspora to Southeast Asian practitioners; (4) social and economic structures describe the caste, kinship, and labour organisation characteristics that shape agrarian practice and influence productivity; and (5) case studies by region examine perceived Tamil influence in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka's Southeast Asian connections. Each component contributes elements of the broader analysis; while limitations may restrict definitive conclusions on the extent of Tamil influence, the five-part framework facilitates a detailed investigation of its nature, mechanisms, and consequences.

Historical background: Tamil diaspora and southeast asian agriculture

Historical records reveal maritime networks connecting the Tamil region with Southeast Asia since the first millennium BCE (Chambers, 2019). The Saṅkavam, an early Tamil silappatikāram text, describes how the Tamil Chola king obtained maritime expertise from Southeast Asian navigators when he engaged a seafaring queen. Tamil merchants migrated to Southeast Asia during the early medieval period, establishing transnational commercial links and sustaining reciprocal itineraries from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries, even after the rise of new regional powers. Diasporic influences forged maritime passages to the Maldives, Malaysia, Sumatra, Java, and Bali, transmitting agricultural know-how to complement land-based irrigation and paddy cultivation systems. Chola modulation of Tamil cultivation systems, capitalizing on these flows, was especially consequential. Broadly schematic, the diachronic Tamil-agrarian knowledge map thus proceeds through inscriptional and numismatic research; subcontinent territoriality; neighborhood multilinguality; labor-oriented literature; market-designated substrates; contact-vocation confluences; and public-knowledge frameworks.

Ideological foundations in Tamil thought related to land and labour

Tamil philosophical and religious traditions enshrine concepts associated with land, tenure, and labour that shape agricultural practice within Tamil-speaking communities. The first suggests an ethical obligation to protect the land; the second stresses custodianship and shares wickedness of land degradation; the third underlines the notion of labour as a natural stage of life that should not be rigidly determined by caste. Such ideas find reflection in customs governing land redistribution, labour organization, and ritual support for agricultural operations, and in fair weather, they appear to have fostered an agrarian culture that promoted environmental health and social equity. Four thematic studies illustrate these notions in operation: the Tamil Gardeners' Temple in Singapore, which elaborates on the concept of *vāntu vi-laiyāṭṭu* (earthly responsibility) by linking the transmission of knowledge and action in support of the land deity with environmental health; Tamil settlement in Malaysia, which emphasises communal custodianship of land and forests; permanency of Tamil agriculture in Selangor, which

argues that custodianship of the land fosters a natural erosion of identity-shame; and the environmental ethos of the Siddhar, which presents a dualistic view of nature and society in the context of Rajinikanth movies. Although the selection is based on a semi-subjective interpretation of the arguments advanced, the results support the hypothesis that belief concepts nurture behaviour conducive to agricultural productivity and ecological stability.

Agricultural knowledge transmission: Techniques, crop systems, and innovation

Tamil diaspora facilitates diverse agricultural knowledge exchanges across Southeast Asia; evidence of transmission includes water conservation, soil management, seasonal calendars, crop diversification, seed sharing, and adaptive techniques. Diffusion occurs through trade networks, mentorship of agricultural practitioners, institutions supporting smallholders and post-graduate developments, and cross-regional engagement fostering Tamil-language education. Specific techniques embraced by dynasties in Tamil Nadu subsequently influence new spaces of agricultural practice across Southeast Asia (Elgar, 2013; Malhan and Rao, 2007).

Social and economic structures influencing agricultural practice

Across Southeast Asia, regions populated by the Tamil Diaspora exhibit distinct socio-economic structures that inform local agricultural practices. The Tamil community operates within the framework of a universal caste system, although the specific arrangements and terminologies differ markedly from those in Tamil Nadu, India (Webb, 1980). The caste system is closely interwoven with the concept of kinship; individuals, referred to as 'kinsmen' or 'clans folk', often regard themselves as belonging to a single caste in conjunction with other groups, forming networks in which members participate in rituals and celebrations.

Tamil lands, kinship groups, and villages frequently identify themselves as farming societies, and individuals are more likely to view employment as accidental and temporary rather than permanent and central to their lives. Nevertheless, other occupations play a large role in the community, along with agriculture. These social and economic structures shape agricultural practices, influence decisions on which crops to cultivate and which techniques to adopt, and dictate the circulation and availability of important resources such as water, ploughs, and materials required to make them.

Kinship and caste structures influence the form of crops grown, methods employed, labour-dispersal techniques, and the associated decision-making and actions within Tamil cultural spheres (Christopher Dhas, 2012). Much agricultural practice is collectivised; decisions on which varieties to plant and when to plant them often involve group engagement at the neighbourhood level, with tablets announcing planting dates erected for consultation. Gender roles concerning agriculture are less defined and less caste-oriented than in Tamil Nadu; men conduct only a fraction of the household agricultural labour, yet their involvement remains crucial, as they possess knowledge of key cropping and other techniques.

Case studies by region: Tamil influence in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka's southeast asian connections

Tamil Hindus in Southeast Asia and along the Indian Ocean trade routes to and from the region played a pivotal role in the spread of agriculture, especially wet-rice

cultivation. These connections can be traced back to 2500 years. Evidence of Tamil influence on crop cultivation and agriculture, techniques, modes, and culture can be found among Southeast Asian populations. The agricultural period introduced preferred grains such as paddy, millet, and vegetables like eggplant, Meetai-kai, and others, worldwide. Culturally significant grains such as paddy-rice, and millets are deeply connected to Tamil traditions and rituals, as Tamil, literature, and Tamil inscriptions testify. Tamil principles regarding land and land tenure, incubation of traditional paddy varieties and crop sharing formed the basis of Tamil agricultural practices in Southeast Asia (Silliale and Rajantheran, 2014). Other feeding materials for nutritional benefits are fascinating; these materials promote water conservation, soil health, biodiversity preservation, sustainable agricultural practices, and gender unbalanced access to agriculture among Tamil communities. It is estimated that 20% of Sri Lanka's Tamil population is concentrated on the eastern and northern sides of the island. The census data on Tamil population distribution in Sri Lanka reported that Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Ampara, and Vavuniya are high-highly populated districts of Sri Lankan Tamils.

Tamil, agricultural practices developed through the adaptive and adaptive means of crop protection, pack area, water regime, agrarian economy, soil health, and alternative crops on top of encroached area. These practices and policies were culturally carried-away and categorized. Tamil inputs on conducting daily water hydration and addressing water scarcity on paddy cultivated area is a widespread practice in Tamil agricultural systems. Tamil, cultural characteristics on water-addressing practices have been witnessed among Tamil agricultural communities. Crop rotation and cropping patterns on mixing grains instead of monocropping practice are seen among Tamil agricultural communities. Indian Tamil agricultural practices in Malaysia reports that the diversity of crop rotation in rice continues crop rotation and cropping respectively up-to two times annually Tamil, agricultural development structure of positive crop flow activities on paddy rice cultivation.

Crop composition has been found in the egg plant, chilies, brinjal seed, chenna, tomato and green-organic material chutney that is general among Tamil agricultural communities. The production and plantation division of Tamil communities mainly focuses on co-concept materials of soil enhancement and input and free-standing product of ginger treatment on feminine crop production system. Forth sampling of banner ann cost matrix at every year on determinative of preferred sales and seasonal general movements through Tamil, agricultural community. Tamil communities reported that fifty-fifth years of practice on growing paharu and production systems through Tamil, agricultural communities in Bogor region. Tamil tea plantation system has been generalised of month interview on sixty-year for tea all system and production system through Tamil, agricultural development. A common of general Tamil inline requires the supply of vegetable seed this high significant had been kept through Tamil agricultural communities in Bogor region on twenty-year practice Tamil, agricultural technology intervention to determine the Tamil culture and agricultural system having higher code, crop-demand, and therefore Tamil crop yield connected.

Institutions, education, and technological adaptation

Schools affiliated with or inspired by the Tamil ethos have played a foundational role in building Tamil communities throughout the world, particularly in Southeast Asia and, to a lesser extent, the islands of the Pacific. The needs of these fledgling communities

promoted the establishment of vernacular schools where the medium of instruction was Tamil. These institutions taught Tamil-language literacy to their child members. Tamil parents and the community as a whole decided to develop their community to an agrarian community. Accordingly, the schools developed associated agricultural training schools and professional schools for training agricultural workers, agricultural science graduates, and agronomy specialists.

These schools and colleges took root in Malaysia and Singapore in the 1940s and later assumed a wider transnational character, covering Tamil centers scattered around Asia and the Pacific and with main centers in Malaysia and Singapore. They established an agricultural research and innovation school in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, with the objective of adapting agricultural technology developed in the temperate climates of South Asia to tropical conditions. The rising demand for agricultural goods resulted in the Tamil Diaspora in Southeast Asia adopting Tamil agricultural knowledge and diversifying their agricultural system. Many practitioners of the Tamil Diaspora in Southeast Asia have narrated their experiences of adapting Tamil technology, know-how, and procedures to local conditions.

Environmental ethics and sustainable practices in Tamil agricultural thought

Shaping and nurturing the land, plants, and animals for food production is an experience that is common to all humanity. Given that agricultural practices surrounding this experience through time and space diverge, crops and farming systems have also been shaped by religious, cultural, communal, agronomic, and economic factors (Mulvaney, 2002). With agriculture being the backbone of growth in Southeast Asia, this paper puts before the eminent role Tamil thought has played in enlivening the agricultural activity of the region. Embedded in Tamil thought and philosophy is the ideation surrounding the significance of the land, cultivation of the crops, tenants of labour, preservation of creation, and overall stewardship of nature. A Tamil philosophical view of agricultural thought devotes conscious attention to environmental ethics, sustainable practices, and interconnectedness between the farmer and land. Beliefs surrounding the stewardship of the environment, harmony with nature and natural cycles, and banners galore call for an adherence to sustainable agricultural practices. Consequently, Tamil agricultural thought places great emphasis on community level cooperation, wider engagement, use of suitable capital, and inspirational means of livelihood. Important to Tamil philosophical thought is the activity of farming with care, strict observance of the principles of sustainability, and engagement in agro-cultivation that promotes soil health, biodiversity of crops, health of waterbodies, and foliage. A parallel philosophy of labour accompanies its agricultural ethics, with a stress on filling land after demise without aiming for accumulation of wealth or the grueling labour of 15 hours a day.

Gender, labor, and community organization within Tamil agricultural settings

The Tamil community in Southeast Asia has maintained a unique and resilient identity over centuries of migration, colonialism, and the establishment of national frameworks. This continues to manifest in the management of agricultural practices, where social organization and community participation define aspects of working, reasoning, and decision making (Ramachandran et al., 2001). Tamil women occupy a prominent position within agricultural practices, where adherence to gendered divisions

of labor and practices such as collective farming groups underpin Tamil ideology and heritage. Such actions represent community maintenance and adaptation, ensuring persistence and longevity within an ever-changing environment. Milestones in agricultural studies within the community indicate that female workers constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce along with crucial activities carried out by women, such as cultivation of vegetables and management of livestock (Panda, 2006). Further crucial research into regions with concentrations of Tamil settlers provides perspective on the long-term development journey that continues to shape and evolve companionship. Tammayidavargal belong to the marginalized communities residing in the arid regions of the southeastern-asian Tamil diaspora. Production and productivity remain comparatively stagnant within the ecosystem, despite the presence of a techno-industrial base. Yet, collective steps have been undertaken at all levels to ensure sustainability within the agricultural domain, underscoring significant off-farm engagement.

Outcomes and impacts on agricultural productivity and rural development

Agricultural engagements have remained a significant occupation of the Tamil Diaspora for centuries, owing to the prevailing agricultural aptitude among Tamils. The Tamil Diaspora spread over Southeast Asia at the turn of the pre-Christian era in large numbers for trade and other activities. Even today agricultural knowledge, experience, and resource management skills in Tamil agriculture have been recognized by institutions such as the International Rubber Research and Development Board, Agriculture Institute of Malaysia, and the Ministry of Agriculture. In Sri Lanka, the East Coast Tamils were the first to grow coconuts commercially; rubber, and mango cultivation were brought to Sri Lanka by Tamils from peninsular India. Studies on various regions, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, covering eight decades, have established that the Tamil Diaspora has acted as a catalyst for the adoption and promotion of agricultural crops and practices.

Documents and fieldwork have generated quantitative data linking the adoption of Tamil-sponsored crops and practices to increased yields, income, and long-term socio-economic development. Extension workers of the Colonial Agricultural Service and their successors reported a greater adoption of Tamil-sponsored crops and practices by Tamils of jackfruit and mango in early 1930s Singapore. In Penang, similar links were established for the cultivation of coffee and rubber. The Indonesia Bureau of Agriculture, established in Java in 1950, documented an accelerated promotion of coconut, rubber, and copra processing associated with the Tamil presence. Colonized Tamil migrants in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore sponsored the largest area under tobacco. In the late 1970s and 1980s, a marked Tamil influence on agriculture was evident among returnees from Malaysia and Singapore in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, as there has been an absence of formal recognition of this diffusion study among Tamil practitioners and the factors influencing adaptations and outcomes have continued to be largely under-explored.

Critical perspectives and debates

The influence of Tamil thought and ideology on agriculture in Southeast Asia has not attracted widespread attention. Nevertheless, a growing body of research highlights diverse critical perspectives and frames the Tamil contribution as an ongoing

transregional dialogue involving the circulation of knowledge, technologies, and ideas within a wider community of practitioners.

Tamil literature, history, and society inform the study's account of agriculture as cultural practice and of agrarian thought and ideology (Chambers, 2019). These broader definitions differ from the prevailing dominant interpretation, which restricts agriculture to technical content within Tamil agrarian science and which attributes Tamil links solely to "adaptive technologies" introduced to specific domains. Such perspectives, though useful, offer only limited insight into the role of Tamil thought within an evolving system of ideas and arguments that circulates between South and Southeast Asia within a larger discourse on agriculture shared across multiple language communities. Therefore, the Tamil contribution to Southeast Asian agriculture is cast as an extension of Tamil thought rather than as Tamil agricultural science per se.

Recent academic work emphasizes the urgent need for research on interventions in food security, resilience, and agro-ecology that attend to the larger conceptual frameworks structuring agricultural practice, especially in the global south (Abraham, 2003). Specialized investigations growing out of such critical work investigate the considerable irrigation and food production systems developed in Southeast Asia and the sustained consideration of water and agro-ecological systems to which these adaptations relate. Very few studies have pursued an explicit comparison of the framing of agriculture as practice within Tamil thought and Southeast Asian scholarly perspectives, whether in definitions, assumptions, trajectories, points of articulation, or additional terms (781ada8b-6aed-452c-bb0c-81964409fd3f). Yet such exploration is essential, both for the significance of Tamil thought on existing developments in the Tamil Diaspora and for the possibility of enlarged typologies which seem vital—on the Tamil side—for the grounding of contemporary discourse in the concerns expressed in earlier thought across the broader Indian Ocean sphere.

Policy implications and contemporary relevance

Agricultural research and extension (ARE) has engaged with intercultural knowledge transfer for more than half a century. It simultaneously embodies lessons of success and failure (Chambers, 2019). Transfer is couched in the prestige of donor knowledge holders and the powerlessness of receiver knowledge holders. Successful intercultural transfer occurs only when clarity of language and practice permits synergistic knowledge blending across substantial cultural, religious, ethnic, social, regional, and socio-economic divides. The conditions for compatibility or incompatibility apply to basic education, horticulture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, integrated pest management, and food processing. Via the Tamil diaspora, agricultural knowledge and practice spread to Southeast Asia. Demographic and documented evidence indicates that Tamil agricultural thought (TAT), a hybrid of Tamil agrarian and Tamil Muslim natural science immersed in world- and local-views, stimulated and continues to stimulate, agricultural growth, innovation, sustainability, and rural development in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Tamil Thought (TT) and Tamil Muslim Thought (TMT), two branches served by Tamil and Arabic scripts respectively, articulate enduring concepts of land and labor with remarkably broad cross-cultural potential for stimulating discussions across different settings. Tamil-diasporic, Tamil, and Tamil-Muslim agricultural knowledge and the fusion of crop and livestock systems spread from Southeast Asia, back-traversing Tamil-diasporic and backmarking routes to the Indian sub-continent during the nineteenth, early twentieth, and late twentieth centuries. Other

crops and farming arrangements arrived on the Indian sub-continent from the areas of the Southeast Asia migrations after Indo-Arab cultural exchanges and the discharge of other Tamil-English views.

Conclusion

The analysis confirms the presence of Tamil ideological elements in land, labor, and agricultural innovations in Southeast Asia. Historical diffusion constituted the initial channel of Tamil influence along the maritime settlement routes, reinforced through subsequent exchanges of knowledge and practices within the Tamil Diaspora, across multiple generations. Aspects of Tamil thought related to land, labor, and stewardship pervaded early Southeast Asian agriculture, expressed through considerations of tenure and community organization, situated learning, approaches to labor and stewardship in narrative traditions, and the social safety nets associated with labor migration. No single tradition dominated or defined practice; a rich variety of expansionary and cyclical production systems were cultivated across the region, using the Tamil expansionary wet rice system as one reference point.

The evolving political landscapes also exercised a profound influence on local adaptation. Within Malaysia, agricultural policy largely remained associated with the economic requirements of Malaysia Inc. Consequently, Tamil people represent only one of the multiple ethnic communities involved in agriculture, and frequently the least influential in terms of land ownership and wealth. Singaporean development paradigms initially continued to emphasize economic growth with limited regard to the environment, later moved towards a policy of nation-building which both encouraged the establishment of Singapore-specific agricultural systems and styled the Tamil community as the guardians of the cultural heritage. In Java and Bali, the adoption of tourism-oriented market liberalization with enabling public policies quickly led to the marginalization of primary production, while Tamil rice producers continued to diversify into horticulture in response to market needs. Tamil experienced traders and agricultural mentors provided valuable links in the expansion of expression of the Balinese traditions of tawur agung and odalan into the Tamil urban temples. Southern Sri Lanka's long-standing association with the East Asian cosmogony together with Tamil settlements oriented agriculture towards a calendrical acknowledgment of the heavens.

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Conflict of interest

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