



South Asia Research and Information Institute

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Dr. Lisa Moore
Chair
Unicode Technical Committee
Unicode Consortium
U.S.A

Dear Dr. Moore,

Subject: Current GOI Proposal to Unicode Technical Committee on the Grantha script

As President of South Asia Research and Information Institute and as a person who constantly works with Grantha text in Tamil inscriptions, I am requesting you to reject the "Proposal to encode the Grantha script in Unicode (L2/10-426)" dated October 18, 2010 until modifications are made to the proposal to address the problems discussed below.

The first problem I see is that the subject proposal misrepresents the nature of Grantha script and its historic use. For your consideration, by way of example, I am attaching an excerpt (Attachment 1) from Kūram Plates, an inscription issued in the 7th century CE by a Pallava king ruling in Tamil Nadu.¹

As you can see in page 3 of Attachment 1 (inscription line 49 in page 150), the text ஊற்றுக்காட்டுக்கொட்ட (Ūrūkkāṭṭukkōṭṭa) embedded in the Sanskrit text is rendered in Tamil script while the rest of the Sanskrit text is rendered in Devanāgarī. The example given includes the use of ṛ and o. There are other inscriptions where other Tamil characters such as Tamil ன (U+0BA9) or ழ (U+0BB4) are used in the midst of Sanskrit written in Grantha script.

Rendering the text ஊற்றுக்காட்டுக்கொட்ட from Tamil in Tamil script is the way to preserve the historical accuracy of the inscriptional record. If the Tamil characters become part of a Grantha superset, this historical fact will be lost and it will be difficult to identify the source language of the original text. This is a significant historical loss.

The second problem is even more significant. If the current Grantha proposal is approved, it will lead to a fundamental misunderstanding of how Tamil was pronounced over the centuries. As mentioned earlier, Tamil inscriptions often have Sanskrit and Tamil texts. Even within a single word, Tamil letters and Grantha letters will be mixed in.² This can be seen in Attachment 2 containing excerpts from Taḷavāyapuram Copper Plates

¹ "A Pallava Grant from Kūram." *South Indian Inscriptions*, Volume 1, no. 151. Published by the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1991, p. 150.

² *Ten Pandya Copper Plates*. Published by The Tamil Varalatu Kazhagam (The Tamil History Academy), Madras, 1967, pp. 98, 102, 112, and 103.



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Evidence indicates that in many cases all or part of Tamil words rendered in Grantha script amidst Sanskrit text have been transliterated letter for letter and not transcribed sound for sound. In this situation, if the word ‘Cōmāci’³ (சோமாசி) is written in Tamil letters as in line 207 of Attachment 2, it could represent a pronunciation where the intervocalic affricate ‘c’ would be pronounced as sibilant ‘s’ in the 10th century.⁴ (This type of surd-sonant variation has been noted by scholars not only in native Tamil words but also in words borrowed from Sanskrit. The fact that in line 84 of Attachment 2, Sanskrit ‘Vātāpi’ is rendered in Tamil as ‘Vātāvi’ (வாதாவி) where Vātāvi < Vātābi* < Vātāpi, confirms this.) If the inscription has only instances of the word transliterated in Grantha as ‘Comāci’ (चोमाची in equivalent Devanāgarī) as in line 42 of Attachment 2, it would lead to an understanding that the intervocalic ‘c’ was pronounced as ‘c’, which would be incorrect. This is the problem resulting from replacing words written in Tamil phonemic script with Grantha phonetic script.

The third problem I see is that the current Grantha proposal does not simply computerize the characters included in the ancient Grantha script used in Tamil Nadu for centuries to represent Sanskrit in literary texts and inscriptions. The proposal adds letters unique to Tamil such as e, o, ḷ, ṛ, and ṅ also to the Grantha script which the Grantha script never included, thus creating a new Grantha script. Here again, historical accuracy will be lost because Grantha short e represented Tamil long ē, and Grantha short o represented Tamil long ō.

UTC has to note that Grantha was a script used to write Sanskrit primarily in the Tamil country. According to Government of India's own statement in its Grantha proposal, the Grantha initiative was "taken to encode our heritage scripts i.e. Vedic Sanskrit and Grantha in the Unicode standard so that our ancient knowledge could be represented on electronic media, computers, etc." In other words, the purpose of the Unicode Grantha should be to process ancient literary and inscriptional texts produced in the past for archiving and transliterating purposes only. The objective should not be to produce a newly-designed script for contemporary communication with characters not historically part of Grantha at the expense of historical accuracy as has been done by the subject proposal. While it is technically possible for users to encode Tamil with Tamil characters and Sanskrit with Grantha characters in the same document, the presence of duplicate Tamil characters in the Grantha character set can lead to data entry errors that are often difficult to detect. For a script with the primary purpose of capturing very large number of historical documents, such a possibility warrants reconsidering the addition of Tamil

³ Tamil ‘Cōmāci’ < Sanskrit ‘Somayājīn’.

⁴ The actual Tamil form found in the inscription is ‘Comāci’ and not ‘Cōmāci’. (The authors of this publication had interpreted what is in the original inscription and had printed using the modern equivalents of ‘ē’ and ‘ō’ where they deemed it appropriate. But we should remember that in terms of historical accuracy in archival preservation, the right thing to have done is to use short ‘e’ and short ‘o’ as is done in the case of ‘Uṛṛukkāṭṭukkōṭṭa’ in Attachment 1.



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characters in the Grantha space. It is also of note that, overwhelming proportion of documents in Grantha script are historical rather than contemporary, and one should err on the side of preserving historical accuracy rather than risk innovations of dubious value with the addition of Tamil characters to Grantha. Another important point to note is that Grantha script is phonetic and the Tamil characters are phonemic in nature. Such a mixture does injustice to an historical script.

When writing texts that have Sanskrit and Tamil letters, one can always switch back and forth between Grantha and Tamil scripts in much the same way Tamil and English is used in modern usage. There is no need to create a superset of Tamil script with English (Latin) alphabetic characters or vice versa. In fact creating a superset will make it ambiguous.

In summary, if the proposal is accepted, it will lead to inaccurate historical documents when ancient inscriptions and manuscripts are digitized, mislead future scholars and researchers, and distort the history of language use in South India. Accordingly, I request you to reject the current Grantha proposal and seek a revised proposal that preserves fidelity to the historical documents with respect to clearly identifying Tamil and Sanskrit texts as well as not adding characters not in the original Grantha script.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sudalaimuthu Palaniappan, Ph.D.
President
South Asia Research and Information Institute
Dallas, TX 75370-0371

Attachments

SOUTH-INDIAN INSCRIPTIONS

Volume-I

TAMIL AND SANSKRIT

FROM STONE AND COPPER-PLATE EDICTS
AT MAMALLAPURAM, KANCHIPURAM IN THE NORTH ARCOT DISTRICT,
AND OTHER PARTS OF THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

CHIEFLY COLLECTED IN 1886-87.



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PART IV.

ADDENDA.

No. 151. A PALLAVA GRANT FROM KŪRAM.

The original of the subjoined grant was bought for Government from the *Dharmakartā* of Kūram, a village near Kāñchīpuram.¹ It is engraved on seven thin copper-plates, each of which measures $10\frac{1}{4}$ by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. As the plates are in very bad preservation, the work of deciphering them was somewhat difficult. Of the seventh plate about one half is completely lost. Next to it, the first, fifth and sixth plates have suffered most. An elliptic ring, which is about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick and measures 4 by $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter, is passed through a hole on the left side of each plate. The seal is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and bears a bull, which is seated on a pedestal, faces the left and is surmounted by the moon and a *linga*. Farther up, there are a few much obliterated syllables. A legend of many letters passes round the whole seal. Unfortunately it is so much worn, that I have failed to decipher it.

The language of the first $4\frac{1}{2}$ plates of the inscription is Sanskrit,—verse and prose; the remainder is written in Tamil. The Sanskrit portion opens with three benedictory verses, of which the two first are addressed to Śiva and the third mentions the race of the Pallavas. Then follows, as usual,² a mythical genealogy of Pallava, the supposed founder of the Pallava race :—

Brahman.
|
Aṅgiras.
|
Brihaspati.
|
Bharadvāja.
|
Drona.
|
Aśvatthâman.
|
Pallava.

The historical part of the inscription describes three kings, *viz.*, Parameśvaravarman, his father Mahendrarvarman and his grandfather Narasimhavarman. Of Narasimhavarman it says, that he “repeatedly defeated the Cholas, Keralas, Kaḷabhras and Pāndyas,” that he “wrote the (*three*) syllables of (*the word*) *vijaya* (i.e., *victory*), as on a plate, on Pulakeśin’s back, which was caused to be visible (i.e., *whom he caused to turn his back*) in the battles of Pariyāḷa, Maṇimaṅgala, Śūramāra, *etc.*,” and that he “destroyed (*the city of*) Vâtâpi.” No historical information is given about Mahendrarvarman, who, accordingly, seems to have been an insignificant ruler. A laudatory description of the virtues and deeds of his son Parameśvaravarman fills two plates of the inscription. The only historical fact contained in this long and difficult passage is that,

¹ Sewell’s *Lists of Antiquities*, Vol. I, p. 187.

² Compare the pedigrees on pages 9 and 25, above, and *Ind. Ant.* Vol. VIII, p. 277.

- [47.] कोटमाणिक्यमनघमविशृतम् मनसि भयविर्ष्यन्पार्थिवानान्दिशि दिशि चटितनित्यौ
[48.] यशम् पुष्पमाला इदम् महरदशोपसक्तया शक्तलक्ष्म्या सह वपुषी विशेषालं-
क-

Plate V a.

- [49.] ते वीरकृत्या तेन परमेश्वरेण ஊற்றுக்காட்டுக்கொட்டமட்கே நீர்வெளுர்நாமமந்யவான்தரராட்டே மஊர்-
[50.] तच्चतुर्वेद'कुलसमृद्धकूरग्रामनाममडके' विद्याविनीतपञ्चवपरमेश्वरगृहे प्रतिष्ठापि-
[51.] तस्य भगवतः परमेशिनः*] पिनाकपाणेः] पूज्यास्तः]पन'कुमुमगन्धधूपदीपहाविरुप-
[52.] हारबलिशंखपट(1)हादिप्रवर्त्तनार्थम् अत्रैव उदकमग्निभारतमाख्यान'निमित्तार्थश्च
[53.] मणयिक्रोष्टमडके पत्मानाममन्यवान्तरराष्ट्रे परमेश्वरमंगलनामग्रामः*] देवतान-⁵
[54.] निमित्त ब्रह्मदेय⁶ विद्याविनीतपञ्चवाधिराजविश्वसतः⁷ [स्सर्वदत्तपरिहारे दत्तः(ः)स्सर्वद-⁸
[55.] त्तपरिहारे⁹ दत्त इति [11*] अत्राज्ञप्तिः¹⁰ उत्तरकारणिकामहासेनदत्तः*] विद्याविनी-
[56.] तपञ्चवपरमेश्वरगृह इह च देवकर्मन'वर्म. ¹¹ कूरत्ताचार्य्यपुत्रअनन्त-

Plate V b.

- [57.] शिवआचार्य्यः*] [दत्त] इति [कुं]छशर्म[1*] द्वौ पुत्र[पौत्रा] आज्ञताः¹² ॥— ஊ[ற்]றுக்-
காட்டுக்கொ-
[58.] ட்டத்தூ நீர்வெளுர்நாட்டுக்கூரமும் றும்மணம்பாக்கமு . . [ளுங்கணத] . .
[ட] விச்சாவிநீ-
[59.] தப்பல்லவரசன் விவெ¹³க்காணங்கெயிக்¹⁴கொடுத்து[ச்சி] . . [டு]ண செயித்து ஆயிரத்தி-
[ரு]றா-
[60.] ற்றுக்குழிப்படியால் விற்றுக்கொண்ட நிலம் [1*] த[ளி] எடுப்பதற்கு ஒடு சுடக்-
கொண்ட நி-
[61.] லம் [1*] தவெ¹⁵ப்பாடகத்தன் குனெ¹⁶மெட்டுப்பட்டியும் ஊறன் மண்டகம் எடுத்த நில-
[62.] த்தொடுக்கூட ஆயிந்தெகால் பட்டி நிலமும் விற்று கொண்டு விச்சாவிநீதப்பல்லவ-
பரமெச்ச-
[63.] ரகரம் எடுத்து எரி தொண்டி இத்தளி வழிபாடு செய்வார்க்கு இருக்கும்
மநெ¹⁷யும் மநெ¹⁸ப்ப-
[64.] ட்ப்பும் வருத்து இதறள் மிக்க நிலம் ஒழுக்கவிக்கு வினெ¹⁹ நிலமா[க]வும் [1*]
இந்நிலத்துக்கு

Plate VI a.

- [65.] [கிழ்பா]வெல்லை மூது²⁰காட்டு வழியின் மெற்கும் [1*] தென்பா[வெல்லை ஊ]ர்
புகு [வழியின் வடக்கு]-
[66.] ம் [1*] மெல்பா[வெல்லை ஊர் புகு வழி நின்றும் வடக்கு கொக்கி நாட்டுக்காலு-
[க்]கெ பொன வ[ழி]-
[67.] யின் கிழக்கும் [1*] வடபா[வெல்லை நாட்டுக்காலிந் தெற்கும் [1*] இந்நாண்கெல்லெ²¹
அகத்து[ம்]

1 Read अष्टशतचतुर्वेदि°.

4 Read उदकमग्निभारताख्यान°.

7 Read विज्ञप्त्या ?

9 Read सर्वकरपरिहारेण ?

12 Read आज्ञताः.

13 Read तலை.

15 Read மனை.

16 Read வினை.

17 Read லை.

3 Read कूरनामग्राममडके.

5 Read देवदान°.

6 The passage enclosed in brackets is engraved over an erasure.

10 Read अत्राज्ञप्तिः.

11 Read निवकर्मार्थ ?

12 Read விலை.

13 Read குனை.

15 Read வினை.

16 Read லை.

3 Read पूजाज्ञापन°.

6 Read 'निमित्तं ब्रह्मदेयं.

6 The passage enclosed in brackets is engraved over an erasure.

11 Read निवकर्मार्थ ?

12 Read கையித்.

13 Read மனை.

15 Read லை.

16 Read முகை.

TEN PANDYA COPPER-PLATES

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THE TAMIL VARALATRU KAZHAGAM

(The Tamil History Academy)

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187. டைக் கொம்பிற்கும் ஒழுகுகள்ளி முரம்புக்கும் நீருடை
 188. அளவைச் சுனைக்கும் ஊருடையான் குழித்தென் கடைக் கொ
 189. ம்புக்கும் நெடுமணிற் கற்றழவுக்கும் நீர்மாற்றுத்தி
 190. டலுக்கும் கடிகமழ் பூந்தார்க் கணத்தார் குழிக்கும் வடக்கு மே
 191. லெல்லை கூற்றன் குழி மீய் குழியேய் போயின படுகாலுக்கும் பொற்
 192. றருமாறுத்த மாணி[க்]குளத்துக் கரை பெருப்புக்கும் நாடறி நங்
 193. கையார் குழியின் மீய் குழியேய் காடனோர்க்கேய் போயின வழிக்
 194. கு மேதமில் லெறிச்சில் வழிக்கும் எழிலமை நேச்சுறநாட் டோலை
 195. க் குளத் தெல்லைக்கும் கிழக்குமன் வடவெல்லை வளமிக்க மருத வே
 196. வி இள நேச்சுறத் தெல்லைக்கும் வெள்ளாற்றுக்கும் தெற்கும் இ

ஆறும் ஏடு—பின்புறம்

197. வ்விசைத்த பெருநான் கெல்லை உண்ணில மொன்றொழியாமல்
 காராண்மை
 198. *மீயாட்சி உள்ளடங்கக் கண்டமைத்துச் சீர்சான்ற திசையனைத்தி
 199. ன்னெல்லைவாய்க் கன்டாட்டித் தருமங்களிரொன்று பயில்
 திருமங்கலத்
 200. துச் சவையார்க்கும் தொல்லை வண் சோமாசிக் குறுச்சி மல்லன்மா
 மறையோர்
 201. க்கும் ஶ்ஷேஷிதி வழாவகைய் ஶி வியின் கண்ணிலை பெறுத்து
 202. ஶ்ஷம் பராயணாகிய ஶ்ஷதி கொடுத்தருளியபின் ஶண்டிய
 பெரும்

* மீயாட்சி என்று படிக்க
 வரி 201. (1) ப்ரஹ்மதேயஸ்தி (2) ப்ரதி (3) த
 ,, 202. (1) ர்மகர்ம (2) தராபதி

