

Comments on “L2/12-353: Letters LLLA and NNNA in Grantha block – Reference documents from experts and users -Comment on 12-039”

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Introduction

In L2/12-353, Dr. Naga Ganesan has mentioned letters from two epigraphists, Dr. S. Raju, and Dr. R. Nagaswamy, and a linguist, Dr. E. Annamalai in support of adding Tamil letters to Grantha. Being an epigraphist or linguist alone is not sufficient to judge this issue. One has to be cognizant of problems in data entry and use of a digital corpus. Their letters do not discuss any of these complexities. These letters were written after the report by INFITT, L2/11-026. Since these letters simply support Dr. Naga Ganesan's earlier requests, the INFITT report should be deemed to have considered their recommendations and found no justification for adding to the Grantha repertoire those Tamil characters that were not part of the traditional Grantha character set. The Government of India proposal which UTC has approved for Grantha encoding is based on this judgment. In any case, I discuss below why there is no merit in the case presented by the letters Ganesan has procured after the INFITT report.

Dr. E. Annamalai's letter

Of the above-mentioned letters, Dr. Annamalai is not an epigraphist and has not offered any evidence in his letter (L2/11-006) that he is aware of the issues involved.

Dr. S. Raju's letter

Dr. Raju has said in his letter (as translated from Tamil by Dr. E. Annamalai),

“I believe that Tamil texts were written in Grantha in the Palghat region is a situation just like the Tamil devotional compositions were written in Grantha in South East Asian countries. Justice Chengottu Velan has mentioned that Kangaiyam Mandradiar of Kaadaiyur, who comes in the line of Kangeyan, the author of the dictionary Uriccol Nighandu, signed his name in Grantha.”

Dr. Raju's statement that the Grantha texts in the Palghat region were similar to Grantha texts of Tamil devotional compositions offers no reason for including the relevant letters in the Grantha repertoire. I should point out that Mr. Mani M. Manivannan in his report for INFITT, L2/11-026, which considered the Thai manuscripts in detail, concluded, “As such it is clear that Marr's paper or the Thai Grantha manuscripts referred to does not in any way support the encoding of these

characters.”¹ As for Raju’s hearsay evidence of some third party having seen some fourth person signing his name in Grantha offers no support for L2/12-039.

Dr. R. Nagaswamy’s letter

As for Dr. Nagaswamy, his statement that “I have read and approve the Govt. of India proposal to encode Grantha script in its entirety for use in the web and computers” shows that he was not familiar with the contents of L2/11-026. As such, his views should be considered superseded by L2/11-026. Moreover, while Nagaswamy claims, “I am considered a leading authority on Tamil and Sanskrit language and scripts...” a careful examination of his work demonstrates that he is not very reliable as an epigraphist. His work also demonstrates a remarkable lack of reliability regarding Tamil script and pronunciation as discussed below.

In *Mirror of Tamil and Sanskrit*, a book Nagaswamy has published earlier this year, he has discussed a temple inscription, which deals with the appointment of a bard (*pāṇan* in Tamil) to sing in front of the temple deity and to train two classes of temple women called *Taḷiyilār* and *Tēvaraṭiyār*.² Given below is an excerpt of what Nagaswamy had written.

A new service was started in the temple of Thiruvudaimarudūr creating an enactment for singing the Thirup-padiyams and also arranging for the dancing girls of the temple to sing in the 9th year of Vikramachola, the son of Kulottunga II. The service was called “**Bānap-peru**” (**Bānap-pani**). This was a royal appointment issued by Vikramachola and a certain IrumudiCholan alias Acancala Peraraiyan was appointed to do the service...The record states that he was to sing in the presence of God of the Thiruvudaimarudūr temple and direct other **Bānas** for arranging the Dancing girls to sing (*Thiruvudai marudur - udaiyārukku - pādavum, ikkoyil Taliyilārai pāduvikkavum ikkoyil Devaradiyārai pāduvikkavum Bānapperāka*). The **Bānas** were great singers from the Sangam age and we find the **Bānas**, **Yālpāna** was a close friend of Jnāna-sambandar and again we find the **Bānas** were appointed in the Great temple of Thanjavaur. According to this inscription the service should be added to the temple service and the **Bāna** should be paid one *kalam* of paddy per day to the Perariyan for singing. He should be allotted one residence as **Bānak**-kudiyiruppu as before...

Nagaswamy’s above findings are replete with errors. The text of the inscription is presented in Exhibit 1.

¹Manivannan (2011:16)

²Nagaswamy (2012:373-74)

புங்[ந]முழுதடையா(ள்)னொடும் விற்றிருந்தருளிய கொவிராஜகேசரிபத்ராந தி-
ஸ்வதவகூரவதிகள் ஸ்ரீகுலோத்துங்-

- 6 க[டு]வாஹ டெவற்கு யாண்டு கூ ஆவது முதல் காணிபெற்றபடிக்கு பாண[ன்] இருமுடி-
சொழந் பிராநான அசஞ்சலப்பெரய(ந்)துக்கு உய்யக்கொண்ட[ர*]ர[வ]ளநாட்டு
திரைமுர்நாட்டு உ[டை]யார் திருவிடைமருதடையாற்கு பாடவும் இக்கொயிலில்
தனியில்லார் தெவ(ர)மடியாரை [ப]ரட்டுவிக்கவும் பாணரை இடக்கடவ(ந்)நாக இவ-
துக்கும் இவந் வ[ந்]-
- 7 ஸத்தாற்கும் இக்கொயில் பாணபெறாக முன்பு பெற்றுவரும் காகம் கெல்லும் உள்பட
யாண்டு ஒன்பதாவது முதல் நான ஒந்துக்கு ஊர்க்கா(ல்)லால் கெல் கலமாக வந்த
நெல்லு இக்கொயிலில் பலபணி நிவந்த[க்]காமரொடுங் கூட நிவந்தத் கட்டி இந்நெல்-
லுக்கு வெண்டும் நிலம் முற்றுடையாரை தவிர்த்து இத்தெவர் தெவதாநமாக ஊர்-
- 8 க(ள்)ளி(ல்)லெ பாணகாணியும் நிலஜிவிதமுட[ராக] அ[டை]த்த முன்பு பாணர் குடியிருப்-
பாக மனையும் இவதுக்கு விட்டு இப்படிக்கு கல்[டு]வட்டி கொள்வதாக ஒன்பதாவது
முதல் பூரணமும் பெற்றமைக்கு பூரணாதஞ் செதருளிக திருமுகம் மலையப்பிராய-
ரும் திருமந்திர ஜலை புதக்குடையாரும் எழுத்திட்ட திருமுகப்படியும் புரொ-
- 9 வரி ஸ்ரீகரணத்து முகவெட்டி நெடும[ண்]முடையாத[ம்*] புரொவரி ஸ்ரீகர[ண்]நாயகம்
பொந்துழாதும் புரொவரி ஸ்ரீகரணமுகவெட்டி பண்ணைகல்லூருடையாதும் புரொ-
வரி ஸ்ரீகரணமுகவெட்டி வெளார்ஜிழவதும் புரொவரி ஸ்ரீகரணமுகவெட்டி அரகு-
ருடையாதும் புரொவரி ஸ்ரீகரணநாயகம் செற்றாருடையாதும் புரொவரிக்கூறு
ப[ந்]க[ள்]ராயரும் சிங்கனராயரும் [வ]ய[ந]ரட்டரைய-
- 10 ரும் எழுத்திட்ட உள்வரிப்படி இத்தெவர் [தெ]வதாநமாக உய்யக்கொண்டார்வ[ன்]-

Exhibit 1. Part of Tiruvīṭaimarutūr grant to Pāṇar, South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 5, pp. 295-96

One can see very clearly that the king in whose reign this inscription was issued was named Kulottuṅka and not Vikrama. More importantly, the Tamil word which Nagaswamy renders in English as **Bāna** is பாணன் (*pāṇan*).³ ‘Pāṇan’ is a native Tamil word of Dravidian and not Indo-Aryan origin. The beginning consonant is ‘p’ and not ‘b’ as shown in the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary entry below.

4068 *Ta.* pāṇ song, melody; Pāṇar caste; praise, flattery; pāṇan an ancient class of Tamil bards and minstrels; pāṇi song, melody, music; pāṇu song; paṇ music; paṇṇu (paṇṇi-) to sing in an instrument (as a tune), tune musical instruments; paṇṇal tuning the lute strings according to the required melody; paṇṇumai quality of a melody; paṇṇiyam musical instrument; paṇṇavan bard; paṇṇar bards. *Ma.* pāṇan a caste of musicians, actors

Exhibit 2. Dravidian Etymological Dictionary Entry for *pāṇan*

³In one instance (highlighted in blue), Nagaswamy renders the word பாணas-pāṇa, when it occurs as part of the name Yāl **pāṇa**.

Now consider the translation of the same inscription by another scholar given below.⁴ [Emphasis mine]

In the ninth year of the reign of Śrī Kulottuṅkacoḷadevar, it is agreed (this) first day of the ninth year that gold and paddy are to be provided as they were formerly provided for the *pāṇar* in this temple, at the rate of 1 *kalam* of paddy, measured by the *ūrkkāl*, per person, for the basic living allowance (*mutal kāṇiperrapaṭi*) for Irumuṭiḷoḷaṇ Pirāṇ alias Acañcalapperayaṇ—who is to sing for the Lord of Tiruvīṭaimarutu in Tiraimūrnāṭu in Uyyakoṇṭārvaḷaṇāṭu, who is to cause the *taḷiyillār tevaraṭiyār* to sing in the temple, and who is to dwell here as the person of this place responsible for the *pāṇar*—and for his descendants (*vaṇśattār*).

We, together with those servants of the temple (*palapaṇi nivantakkārar*) who are partners in this agreement, assign, as formerly to the *pāṇar*, the land necessary to produce this paddy and additional expense money—land that is part of the *tevatāṇam* of this god—as land for the support of *pāṇar* (*pāṇakāṇi*), as their “livelihood” (*jīvitam*).

It is obvious that Nagaswamy has repeatedly rendered Tamil பண்ண- as *Bāṇa* for which there is no basis in the inscription or in Tamil usage. Native Tamil words do not begin in ‘b’. Nagaswamy’s use of ‘b’ in ‘*Bāṇa*’ in place of ‘p’ is evidently a case of hypercorrection based on the influence of Sanskrit.⁵ This is analogous to the hypercorrection of intervocalic -ḍ- in a Vedic Sanskrit text into -ḷ- in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which I had discussed in L2/11-326. Inasmuch as Nagaswamy’s use of ‘b’ in place of ‘p’ is no basis for including Sanskrit ‘b’ in Tamil repertoire, there is no basis for including Tamil LLLA in the Grantha repertoire, notwithstanding Nagaswamy’s “authority on Tamil and Sanskrit language and scripts”.

The reason for calling this Vedic use of LLLA as hypercorrection is that this is the reverse of what happens when a Tamil word containing -ḷ- is borrowed into Sanskrit. This can be seen in the Chintakamanta inscription, which has both Sanskrit and Tamil portions written in Grantha script. An excerpt of the inscriptional text is presented in Exhibit 3. In this inscription the Tamil word கோழி (*Cōḷa*) is rendered as *Cōḷa* (*Chōḷa* in Exhibit 3) in the Tamil portion in line 46 even as it is rendered as *Cōḷa* (*Chōḷa* in Exhibit 3) in the Sanskrit portion in line 42. This is another indication that LLLA in line 46 is borrowed from the Tamil script and was not a part of traditional Grantha script. That is why epigraphists like K. G. Krishnan have called LLLA used in line 46 as Tamil LLLA.

⁴Orr (1999:102)

⁵In a Sanskrit music composition of MuttaiyāPākavataṛ beginning in “*pañcavaktram*”, we find the name Bāṇa-bhadra, in which the first component is a Sanskritized version of Tamil Pāṇa-.

39 yaṁkara sakala-kalā-parāyaṇa mūva-rāya asura-nā¹-
 40 rāyaṇa nitya-satya-pravōda(bōdha) arirāya-jaga-jhampa vai-
 41 bhava-nilimpa Nandagiri-Sū[r*]ya-vaṁś-ēśvara Pāmiḍi-pu-
 42 ravarādhīśvara Chōḍa-vaṁśa-pradīpa arirāya-jaga t*]trā-²
 43 [ṇa] Bhōganāthadēva-divya-srī-pāda-patm(dm)-ārādhaka
 44 para-bala-sādhaka-nām-ādi-samasta-prāsa-
 45 st[i]³-sahitam śrīman-mahā-maṇḍalēśvarann-**Allu-Gaṁga-**
 46 **chōḷa**-mahārājan tanu(nnu)ḍaiya amṇāman **Rāyi-**

Exhibit 3. Cōḷa and Cōḍa in the Chintakamanta inscription⁶

Mr. Maravanpulavu K. Sachithanathan's letter

Dr. Ganesan has also cited a letter from Mr. Maravanpulavu K. Sachithanathan, a publisher, for printing some specific Tamil texts in the Grantha script to satisfy the request of one person, the royal priest of Thailand. According to Mr. Sachithanathan, although the priest uses Grantha script, he can read Tamil script.⁷ To satisfy the desire of one person, who can read the Tamil script in any case, altering the character set of Grantha, which will adversely affect the interests of millions of Tamils by adversely affecting the study of Tamil inscriptions is grossly unfair. This is especially so when it is not necessary.

Let us look at a text Mr. Sachithanathan has produced to satisfy his client.⁸ Consider Exhibits, 4, 5, and 6 below, which show excerpts from that text. Each exhibit shows a Tamil text in Tamil script followed by the same text rendered in Grantha script which includes characters that seem to have been invented to represent Tamil characters that are not part of traditional Grantha.

ஆதியும் அந்தமும் இல்லா அரும்பெருஞ்
 சோதியை யாம்பாடக் கேட்டேயும் வாட்டடங்கண்
 சூழியுஞ் சுநுழை ஐயூ சுருஷ்ஞ்சு
 வெலாழியெ யா ஶ்ரீபுஷ் கெட்டெயுஞ் வாட்டபுஷ்ஞ்

Exhibit 4. Tiruvempāvai 1.1-2 in Tamil and Grantha in Sachithanathan (2011)

⁶Narasimhaswami and K. G. Krishnan (1967:182)

⁷See the Introduction section of Sachithanathan (2011).

⁸Sachithanathan (2011)

பாசம் பரஞ்சோதிக் கென்பாய் இராப்பகல்நாம்
பாஸல் பரஞ்ஜோதிக் கெந்நீயாய் ஐராப்பகல்நாம்

Exhibit 5. Tiruvempāvai 2.1 in Tamil and Grantha in Sachithananthan (2011)

சீசி யிவையுஞ் சிலவோ விளையாடி
வீவீ யிவெயுஞ் சிலவோ விளையாடி

Exhibit 6. Tiruvempāvai 2.4 in Tamil and Grantha in Sachithananthan (2011)

Each of the Exhibits 4, 5, and 6 has an occurrence of Tamil letter *c* following Tamil *ñ*. The relevant words are *cōti* in Tiruvempāvai 1.2 and 2.1, and *cilavō* in Tiruvempāvai 2.4. While the three occurrences are all cases of *c* following Tamil *ñ*, in each case they have been **transcribed** into Grantha using three different Grantha letters—with letter *s* in line 1.2, letter *j* in line 2.1, and letter *c* in line 2.4. Thus, according to Sachithananthan, *s*, *j*, and *c* are all equivalent.

Now let us look at the **transcription** of *rr* in this work as seen in Exhibits 7 and 8 below.

தீர்த்தன்நற் றில்லைச்சிற் றம்பலத்தே தீயாடும்
தீதூந்நரர் ரிசெயுந் ரு. ஐயதே தீயாடும்

Exhibit 7. Tiruvempāvai 12.2 in Tamil and Grantha in Sachithananthan (2011)

சீதப் புனலாடிச் சிற்றம் பலம்பாடி
வீதவ் புனலாடிச் சிற்றம் பலம்பாடி

Exhibit 8. Tiruvempāvai 14.3 in Tamil and Grantha in Sachithananthan (2011)

What is rendered as *rr* in Exhibit 7 is rendered as *tr* in Exhibit 8. Obviously, for Sachithananthan *r* and *t* are equivalent.

Exhibit 9 below shows both *nr* and *nt* being transcribed with the cluster *nd*.

போதா ரமளியின்மேல் நின்றும் புரண்டிஙஙன்
பொஊ ரஊஸியிநீஜெஹ் நிணுஹ் ஸௌணியிஹ்

Exhibit 9. Tiruvempāvai 1.6 in Tamil and Grantha in Sachithananthan (2011)

Exhibit 9 shows that Mr. Sachithananthan considers *n* and *ṇ* to be equivalent. It should be noted that I have given only a few examples of such issues in Sachithananthan (2011). Thus in trying to convert a text in phonemic Tamil script into phonetic Grantha script, Sachithananthan seems to have no problems with transcribing one Tamil character using different Grantha characters and transcribing different Tamil characters with the same Grantha character. Given this situation, he might as well transcribe the Tamil text with characters in the existing Grantha set instead of requiring additional Grantha characters.

It would have been right for Sachithananthan to advise the Thai priest that the priest should read the Tamil text in Tamil script, which the priest knows or in the Thai script with whatever additional characters invented to transcribe Tamil. These two options will not impact the processing and use of Tamil inscriptional corpus which are important to several millions of Tamils. If Sachithananthan insists on transcribing Tamil text into Grantha, he can do so following the GOI approved proposal for encoding Grantha.⁹

Tamil texts in Grantha script

Dr. Ganesan also has stated in L2/12-353 that the Grantha script “has been considered sacred and is used for transcribing holy texts from Dravidian languages (such as Tamil and Malayalam) for centuries.” It should be noted that the excerpt from *Textes sanskrits et tamouls de Thaïlande* (TSTT), which Ganesan provided in L2/11-034, show that Thai manuscripts were not precisely transcribing Tamil texts into Grantha. For instance, they were transcribing Tamil *t* and *ṭ* identically. Interestingly, in his review of TSTT, John R. Marr writes¹⁰:

Neelakanta Sarma has solved one riddle which baffled this reviewer (see JSS, LX, 2, 1972, 61-87, esp. pp. 63-4), the identity of the text in the MS fol. 179, beginning: *devaruḍḍināṇe tarumum*.... Despite being wedged among Śaiva material, it is, he shows, the first decade of Nammālvār, Tiruvāymoḷi, I, which begins: *Tiruvalutināt' enrum*.... (see pp. 89-90, photos. 136ff.)

⁹Keeping in mind the phonemic nature of the Tamil script, instead of attempting to transcribe Tamil, Sachithananthan should have transliterated Tamil into Grantha. Of course, along with the transliteration, he should have tried to inform his client of the simple rules of Tamil pronunciation. That way, one can convert back and forth between Grantha and Tamil without any problem too.

¹⁰Marr (1975: 498)

One can see that the Thai manuscript has transcribed *l* as *r*. All these only confirm Manivannan's conclusion in L2/11-026 that the Thai manuscripts do not support the case for adding the Tamil letters such as NNNA and LLLA to the Grantha set.

Other than the situation of Thai manuscripts already discussed, Ganesan did not produce any genuine evidence for his claim of Tamil texts being written in Grantha script. As L2/11-026 showed, Ganesan offered some hand-written samples as evidence of publication of such texts by 'Sanskrita Granthalipi Sabha, Chennai'. L2/11-026 showed that there is no record that 'Sanskrita Granthalipi Sabha, Chennai' had ever existed. Clearly, any reasonable person is likely to conclude that Ganesan had fabricated his evidence and his above-mentioned statement has no merit whatsoever.

Conclusion

The supporting letters Ganesan has offered for the proposal do not show any awareness of the complexities related to creation and use of the digital corpus of inscriptions. On top of this, non-existent evidence is being cited repeatedly by Ganesan even though it has been discredited already by L2/11-026. Ganesan also continues to offer erroneous information deliberately regarding the use of LLLA and NNNA in Tamil inscriptions even after the right information is presented with evidence, as in the case of Chintakamanta inscription. The samples of Grantha use in Thai manuscripts also do not support the inclusion of NNNA and LLLA in the Grantha repertoire. Therefore, I request the Unicode Technical Committee to reject L2/12-039, the proposal for including NNNA and LLLA in the Grantha repertoire.

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