EARLY
SOUTH INDIAN PALÆOGRAPHY

BY

T. V. MAHALINGAM, M.A., D. Litt.
Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology,
University of Madras

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
1974
General Editor:

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FOREWORD

This book on early South Indian Palaeography written by Dr. T. V. Mahalingam, Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology in the University of Madras is a definite contribution to the study of original scripts in South India. The book presents in an interesting form the evolution of early Indian scripts more particularly of the Tamil country. Strangely enough we owe the beginnings of the scientific study of Indian scripts to European authors, who by their knowledge of India linguistics and palaeography have contributed largely to the understanding of Indian Epigraphy and given an impetus to a study of this subject. In the few centuries before and after the Christian era the Brahmi script was extensively used in inscriptions on rocks, caves, earthenware and coins. Such inscriptions have been found in different places in India and it is only with their actual decipherment that a comparative study of the epigraphs and their languages has become possible. The script on the seals from Mohenjodaro and Harappa has been interpreted in different ways and the great savant Father Heras has sought to read old Tamil in the seals. We have now advanced very much from the days of pictography to the modern alphabets of different languages. I must congratulate Dr. Mahalingam on an exceedingly useful and scientifically accurate publication on Early South Indian Palaeography that he has brought out. He has placed all students of Palaeography under a debt of gratitude.

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS,

A. L. MUDALIAR,
Vice-Chancellor.
PREFACE

The history of the study of Indian Palaeography is nearly two centuries old, and its commencement synchronised with the foundation of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta by Sir William Jones in 1784. South Indian Palaeography, however, did not receive any attention till the days of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the Surveyor-General of the British East India Company in South India during the first two decades of the last century and Babington (1828) who prepared a table of letters based on the Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions at Māmallapuram. In 1833 Sir Walter Elliot prepared an elaborate table of the earlier forms of the Kannada alphabet, while four years later Captain H. Harkness compiled his Ancient and Modern Alphabets of the popular Hindu Languages of the Southern Peninsula of India. But the first systematic work on South Indian Palaeography was done by A. C. Burnell who produced in 1874 a valuable book on the subject Elements of South Indian Palaeography (from the 4th to the 14th century A.D.), being an introduction to the study of South Indian inscriptions and manuscripts. In 1896 John George Buhler brought out a monumental work on Indian Epigraphy called Indische Palaeographie which even now serves as a standard work on the subject. Originally written in German, it was translated into English in Volume XXXIII of the Indian Antiquary J. F. Fleet. He made a comparative study of the different forms which the scripts assumed with the progress of time and was able to “illustrate most of the Indian alphabets by cuttings from facsimiles, instead of hand-drawn signs.” He has given in his work considerable space to the early South Indian scripts and pointed out some of the main differences between the North Indian and South Indian ones. G. H. Ojha’s book in Hindi called Bharatiya Pracīna Lipimāla (the Palaeography of Ancient India), published in 1918, contains a short account of the evolution of the South Indian scripts also. Ahmad Hasan’ Dani’s Indian Palaeography (1963) is the latest general book on the subject and deals with the Palaeography of South India also. D. C. Sircar’s book, Indian Epigraphy (1964), which is a comprehensive treatment of the subject does not deal with
Palaeography which he has promised to bring out in a separate volume. Raj Bali Pandey’s *Indian Palaeography* (1952) which is a general and useful book on the subject does not deal with South Indian Palaeography or Epigraphy.


So early as 1883 Burgess wrote: “As applied to Indian inscriptions, comparative palaeography has as yet made little progress towards scientific accuracy, and much has still to be done before we can use the characters of different inscriptions with full confidence as a safe guide to chronology.” This observation is still true, though some work on the South Indian inscriptions and their palaeography has been done so far. For such study actual impressions and facsimiles of inscriptions are needed; and the publication of photo copies of some of the South Indian inscriptions in the volumes of the *Epigraphia Indica* and *South Indian Inscriptions* has helped to a great extent the study of the evolution of writing in South India.

There have been found so far some sixty label inscriptions in Brāhmi characters of the Drāviḍi type in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tiruccirappalli, Coimbatore and North Arcot in the Madras state and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. They constitute the basic material for a study of South Indian Palaeography in its earliest phases. The first attempt at a study of these inscriptions was made by Venkayya who thought that the natural caverns in which the few inscriptions known then were found were Buddhist and that the language of the inscriptions was Pali. It was between 1907 and 1918 that more inscriptions of the kind were discovered in different places in the southern districts of the Madras State by scholars like V. Venkayya, H. Krishna Sastri, K. V. Subramanya
Ayyar and Radhakrishna Ayyar. A number of these inscriptions were published by H. Krishna Sastri in the *Proceedings of the First Oriental Conference* (Poona 1919). But a more scientific and detailed study of the inscriptions was made by K. V. Subramanya Ayyar in the *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference* (Madras, 1923). Krishna Sastri felt that the language of the records was "early Tamil." After these, a few more inscriptions were discovered and all of them were studied by C. Narayana Rāko, who concluded that the language of the records was Paścāci Prākṛt.

Casual studies of these inscriptions were made later by T. N. Subramanyan in his *Pandai Tamiḻ Eḻuttukkal* (1931) and *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*-Volume III, pt. II (1957), K. K. Pillay in *Tamil Culture* (1958), and Kamil Zvelabil in the *Archiv Orientalní* (1964). (But no systematic attempt has been made so far to study all the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country from the point of view of their authors, language, grammar, palaeography and contents. The script of these inscriptions which differs from the Aśokan Brāhmī in some respects to serve the needs of the language in which the records were written formed the basis for the development of later South Indian scripts.)

Since the main body of the book was printed Sri Irvavatham Mahadevan, i. a. s., who has made an independent study of the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country, has made available his readings and interpretations of them. But I have not been able to consider them in the present Volume.

The figures given in the book have been taken from Mason’s *A History of the Art of writing* and Diringer’s *The Alphabet.*

I am under obligation to the Archaeological Survey of India for supplying me photographs of the Brāhmī inscriptions dealt with in this book and of which they have the copy right. Mr. T. N. Subrahmanyan gave me valuable suggestions and help in my study of the Brāhmī inscriptions for which I am very much beholden to him. Dr. N. Subrahmaniam, Reader in Indian History went through a few chapters in the manuscript and gave me some useful suggestions for which I am thankful.
to him. I am indebted to Sri S. Gurumurthy, M.A., Research Assistant and Sri Y. Subbarayalu, M.A., Research Fellow in the Department for helping me in seeing the work through the Press. Sri Gurumurthy and Sri G. Ramamurthy, M.A., Technical Assistant in the Department, prepared the index for the book for which my thanks are due to them.

Dr. Sir A. L. Mudaliar, Vice-Chancellor of the University was good enough to contribute a foreword for the book for which I am very much beholden to him.

I am grateful to the Vice-Chancellor and Syndicate of the University of Madras for sanctioning the publication of the work as the first one in the Madras University Archaeological Series.

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UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
10—7—1967

T. V. MAHALINGAM.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTORY
SECTION I
Sign Language

Writing is one of the finest fruits of human endeavour; as well as speech it is the instrument of culture and civilization. "The invention of printing though ingenious, compared with the invention of letters is no great matter," observes Thomas Hobbes, the English philosopher, in the Leviathan. Indeed the letters and numerals have played such a vital role in human history that with Lewis Morgan, the late Prof. Gordon Childe regards them as part of the technological revolution. It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that anthropologists, prehistorians and archaeologists have laboured hard for years to know and interpret the origin and development of writing. It is evident that through writing man has sought to get over the shortcomings of speech; and history bears testimony that he has largely succeeded in it. Writing, thus, is an extension of speech; and it arose out of severe social necessity. "In the more primitive life, as man advanced in the scale of civilization and tribal life became more complex, and as tribes came into contact with each other, enlarging their horizon of life and action, verbal speech proved inadequate as a means of communication." With the newer phases of the broadening life, the dealings among men grew in number and complexity subjecting the memory to heavy strains and there was the need to record them.

Life had to be made smooth; for society to hold together matters among men had to be definite. With oral transactions and agreements depending primarily on memory and conscience for their fulfilment, there was no standard, concrete, universally agreed and readily verifiable evidence to be invoked whenever necessary. There was then the need to preserve knowledge and pass on the traditional lore to posterity. But above all, laws had

1. Leviathan, (Oxford Edn.) Ch. IV, 'of speech', p. 23.
2. Social Evolution, p. 23; also Kenneth Oakley, 'A Definition of man', Science News, No. 20, p. 75.
4. We are told for instance, that in Sumer, a Temple could dispose of vast estates, flocks and herds, huge revenues, and issue advances and loans. Writing became essential there to record these transactions as well as maintain accounts satisfactorily and in a manner understandable to all: Gordon Childe, Man Makes Himself, p. 180).
to be codified or the ever present danger of social disintegration would stare us in the face. There can be no doubt that verbal means were unequal to meet the tough problems of an expanding social life. It is true that our ancestors had a strong memory, deep in its roots and colossal in its dimensions. Yet, there was limit to its load; for every man’s memory has its own degrees and peculiarities of fading. Consider our own scriptures; great as our oral tradition is, the textual problems would have been much less refractory had writing been employed in India to a definite degree very early.

Memory is fallible; and communication needs both parties to be at the same time and place, unless messengers are employed. Surely no community with any signs of progress would submit to such limitations. Speech, therefore, requires a ghost to represent it and strangely enough a ghost which should not by any chance be ethereal. Given this situation writing is a corollary of social life. And it should be a surprise only if man had not developed it. But obviously writing as we have it now was not the invention of a single day nor of a single man. It has existed longer within the womb of society than out of it.\(^5\) Years ago Sir Edward Tylor wrote: \("\text{the art of writing......was developed......by a few steps of invention, which, if not easy to make, are at any rate easy to understand when made.}\) But those few steps have accelerated social life as fast as they required a long time to materialise; and as they are at least as easy to comprehend now, we happen to know a good deal of the history of writing.

The earliest form of writing was the pictograph. But we must examine how the pictographs themselves evolved, though we do not have the evidence of material records to help us. However, here anthropology should borrow from geology its classical principle of uniformitarianism. We can interpret events of the past by considering processes currently at work and accessible to our observation. Adopting this method it should be remembered that the evolution of writing is best studied together with the cognate process of speech. And it may be safely concluded that

\(^5\) "Still it may safely be claimed that the final chapter is practically completed and that the long historical development of written characters for ever is a closed book," Mason, op. cit., p. 14.

the earliest 'languages' must have been a combination of gesture and onomatopoeia. Mason writes: "It is more than an idle metaphor to liken this sign-language to actual writing in the air with the hands......it was not so much the movements of the hands as the picture of the movements that prefigured in many cases the subsequent written signs of which they were prototypes.' In a profoundly instructive article Sir Richard Paget cites De Kempelen's finding that (a) the various sounds of speech are simply the ordinary results of the positions of the articulating organs and further concludes, what De Kempelen failed to realise, the (b) the organs of articulation were themselves influenced by pantomimic hand-signs. In the same article Sir Richard has summarised Dr. J. Rae's conclusions that (a) the primitive form of spoken 'word' would express simply the completed action, (b) the lips, tongue and mouth as a whole have resemblances to external objects and actions and (c) the primitive significant sounds were all monosyllables and expressed force, form and movement."

In the *Pickwick Papers* Charles Dickens describes Sam Weller laboriously writing his valentine to Mary and at the same time *forming with his tongue imaginary characters to correspond.* Later on the same concord of hand and mouth was observed by Charles Darwin; children learning to write move their tongues in

7. op. cit., p. 20. "For instance, if an Indian desired to say that you were not truthful, he would touch his tongue with one finger and hold up two fingers towards you signifying that you were double-tongued, that is untruthful. If he wished to say that a given place was distant two, three or more days' journey, he would twirl the fingers of both hands one over the other like a wheel rolling, inclining his head as if asleep and hold up as many fingers as there were 'sleeps', meaning nights; thus indicating the number of days of travel necessary to reach the place in question. If he desired to refer to the past, he would extend the hand in front with the index finger pointed, drawing his arm back with a screw motion, meaning a long time back. If he intended to refer to the future, he would put his hand with the index finger at his back pushing it forward with a screw motion, thus indicating a distant time in the future." J. Lee Humphreys, *Twenty Years Among Our Hostile Indians*, quoted by Mason, in his book, op. cit., p. 21.

8. 'The Origin of Language', *Science News*, No. 20. "It will be noted that Dr. Rae assumed that the human mouths pantomimed, as it were on its own account and not as understudy to the human hands. He was evidently unaware of the Sam Weller effect" (p. 86).

9. Ibid., p. 84.
a ridiculous fashion and persons cutting with scissors often move their jaws in unison with their hands." Here is "direct evidence to explain how in the beginning, primitive man's attempts to explain himself, by natural hand pantomime must have resulted in unconscious mouth movements accompanying the hand pantomime." This evidence is confirmed by the "natural pantomimic language of the uneducated born-deaf" and "anthropologically speaking, the uneducated born-deaf are living fossils indicating the mental condition of early man before the discovery of verbal symbolism."

After all speech is but one form of expression and there are many things spontaneously expressed by gestures to this day. And even speech is usually accompanied by gesticulation. Among many tribes inter-tribal communication is carried on only by means of gestures. The earliest pieces of writing, the pictographs, as we have seen, are only recorded gestures. It is, therefore,

10. Science News, No. 20, p. 84.

11. Ibid., p. 85. "And if these unconscious mouth movements were themselves accompanied by emotional sounds, expressing the pantomimist's anxiety to be noticed and understood, then speech like sound would inevitably result." See Ibid., p. 90 for Paget's account as to how in the English language, the tongue deals with actions in which both hands are normally involved.

T. H. Huxley wrote: "Although the tongue is credited with the responsibility of speech as the 'unruly member' and undoubtedly takes a very important share in its production, it is not absolutely indispensable." (Elementary Physiology, p. 338.) (Macmillan, 1929). Attention is drawn to the actual instance cited in the book of a man whose "conversation was perfectly intelligible" after his "tongue had been removed as completely as a skillful surgeon could perform the operation."

In such a case pronunciation of some letters may not be clear. A similar handicap (though to a lesser extent) will be experienced by a person who has lost his teeth and yet the "speech function" of teeth is generally not quite well appreciated.


13. In Dr. Starling's Principles of Human Psychology (p. 357), expressive gestures have been anatomically classified into facial, manual, corporal and pedal.

The tongue 'plays its part in the language of gesture such as biting the tongue in uncertainty or anguish, licking the lips in anticipation and protruding it in rudeness' (R. J. Harrison, Man the Peculiar Animal, p. 80).
certain that speech and writing had common, though not necessarily coeval origin in imitative gestures. They must then, be integrally viewed and interpreted; and physiologically too there is some basis for this approach in that speaking and writing are but two forms of one process. It is probable that in the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex is an area for writing. This must be intact for one to remember how to make the highly co-ordinated movements involved in writing language and in drawing. Nevertheless to some extent speech and writing entail cortical and subcortical dynamics in their entirety. As against a too rigid assignment of exclusive functions to the different regions of the cortex, Dr. Marie stresses that speech functions must be considered as a whole. “both for spoken and written speech.” Pavlov regarded speech as the external manifestation of the second signalling system; speech, according to him was the ‘signal of signals.’ Writing too, then, would come under the second signalling system.

14. Speech must have been collaterally influenced by onomatopoeia, but that too is one kind of imitation.

14a. “In the past insufficient emphasis has been laid on the fact that stuttering and writer’s cramp belong to the same group of disabilities. Writing and speaking are motor forms of expression in language. Writer’s cramp and stuttering are muscular spasms which interrupt the normal flow of writing and speaking.........Exactly the same kind of treatment is required in both.........” (L. S. P. Davidson and Col. D. M. Dunlop and J. M. McNeely—Text Book of Medical Treatment, (V Edu. 1950), pp. 887.88.)


16. “The power of speech, which belongs only to man, is a result of the brain. The fact that a child commences to speak only after it has learned to handle objects and to walk, is an indication of the complexity of this function”. (Henry Dryere, Aids to Psychology (4th Edn.), Bailliere Tindall & Cox, London, 1957 p. 212.), Italics mine.

17. Samson Wright, Applied Physiology. (1956) p. 674. By “speech function” Dr. Marie seems to imply speaking and reading only. But if these two are part of the same process, and to read what is written is a ‘speech function’ writing itself should not be in any way different.


19. Best and Taylor observe: “As a child which is taught to read auditory speech is associated with visual symbols of speech, and finally through an association between these, and the motor area for the hand, the child learns to express his auditory and visual impressions by the written word”. (Physiological Basis of Medical Practice, 1940).
Anybody who investigates intensively the physiology of writing and determines the precise role of the brain and the central nervous system would be rendering a great service. Incidentally that would give us a clearer understanding of the evolution of writing also. For, while the stimulus of social environment is undeniable, nevertheless there may have been another complementary factor; perhaps man has an "inborn propensity for graphic expression." And it is no flight of the imagination to think that this potential instinct to write or draw is man's biological inheritance which he shares with the members of the pongidae. Dr. Julian Huxley once observed a young gorilla in the zoo trace the outline of his shadow on the wall with his finger. Leonard Bowen happened to see rhesus monkeys trace the outline of their hands in the dust using a twig held like a pencil.

20. John Gray McKendrick's remarks deserve reproduction here: "Nature knows nothing of letters and syllables; words are simple phones or combinations of phones, and each phone is formed of vibrations. This is nature's longhand method of recording speech; written or printed letters are a species of short hand invented by man" (Principles of Physiology, Williams and Nargate, London).

21. Paget writes: "It is interesting to note that the dawning as it were, of hand and mouth sympathy is to be seen in the chimpanzees; but with this difference, that the sympathy appears to be limited to hand with lips and jaw, and not to hand and tongue" (Science News, No. 20, p. 85.)

Kenneth Oakley writes: "It is sometimes assumed that the difference in mental capacity between apes and man is accurately reflected in their brain-sizes. Unfortunately the facts do not justify the use of this simple criterion because mental capacity depends rather more on the quality of the cortical association areas of the brain than on its size. It is true that the comparative psychology of primates shows that the rating of mental capacity is broadly paralleled by the order of magnitude of the brain. The recorded range of adult brain-size in normal man is from 830 cc. to 2,100 cc., whereas the brains of gorillas range from 340 to 685 cc. But as Dr. E.I. White has lately pointed out to me a child of our own species is usually beginning to talk at the age of two years; yet at that age a brain capacity of 650 cc. is probably well within the proper range. Thus one cannot assume that an adult Australopithecus with a brain of that size was incapable of speech. In any case Dr. Broom's latest discoveries in South Africa suggest that some australopithecines may have had brains approaching 850 cc." ('A Definition of Man', Science News, No. 20.)


23. Ibid.
Now to the different stages in the evolution of the alphabet. The rationale behind writing has been examined earlier. Speech is perishable and yet when translated into writing it gains permanence defying the corroding hand of time. But space, how to conquer that? How to communicate over a wide area in a short time? Herein comes the ‘tom-tom.’ One may wonder whether clapping of hands was its fore-runner. Writing is the result of evolving visual symbols, to correspond to conventional auditory symbols; in tom-tom, on the contrary, a secondary system of auditory symbols is built up to be equivalent to the primary system i.e. speech. And the hand, instead of the letters or figures of writing, produces sounds. One should not, however, imagine, that the use of the voice had no place in tom-tom. In the initial stages, before the development of drums and wind-pipes, the human “cry” must have been an important means of communication. Even now in upper India the “Coo–ee” is an oft-used method of transmitting news from village to village. The acoustic method of communication is generally used by any community living in a compact area, while the optical method obtains among tribes living in the vast open spaces. To this day, the acoustic means are common even among advanced people: the temple-bell, the town-crier, the bugle-call are a few instances. But with the primitive people tom-tom is highly developed, requiring good skill, and a great variety of subtle and intricate things can be dexterously conveyed. Their system of telecommunication too has multitudes of local ‘stations,’ and messages would be transmitted, picked up and relayed by one another. The drum is

24. “Language does not function by the spoken word alone, but may assume all forms of expression, which the physical structure of the organs of speech allow.” (Julius E. Lips, The Origin of Things, p. 218.)

25. “Standing on a commanding point, may be a big rock or the roof of a house, a man cooes to attract the attention of the people in a high pitch voice. From village to village the message is tossed and is broadcast throughout large areas in an incredibly short space of time” (Jim Corbett, Man Eaters of Kumaon, (Oxford, 1947, p. 34.)


26a. It is said that Tirumalai Nayaka of Madura (1623-59) got within a short while information in this way of the midday worship in the temple at Srivilliputur about fifty miles away and it was only after he heard the news that he took his food.
the most important instrument used and the drummers perch themselves on tall trees, to command a good view over a wide range; or they may call each other from hill-top to hill-top with intermediate stations relaying the news. With this system in operation nothing can escape the notice of the tribe; the movement of anything, an animal to be hunted, or an enemy sneaking deftly, or a stranger wandering aimlessly is observed with remarkable agility and the news transmitted in the tribe's own "Morse Code." In a trice the incorrigible jungle reverberates with gyrating drumbeats and the tribesmen are rushed to the trouble spot with the necessary equipment for immediate action.

But tom-tom is a by-lane in the evolution of writing; and there were others too. One stage of writing is marked by the use of totem-signs by primitive peoples; this was definitely an effective system of record which could solve problems of personal identification and constituted really "a primitive genealogy." Of all primitive attempts the nearest approach to writing is made by the use of totems as autographs. A similar "but somewhat adventitious" influence in the evolution of writing was the use of private ownership marks. Apart from identification, the vital problem in all early recording was the need for memory jogs; it has been indicated earlier that even pictographs had essentially a muemonic origin. There are varieties of these ingenious muemonic devices, though perhaps the knotted cord is the most common. The Peruvian quipus (quipos, kipus) usually consisted of various threads or cords differing in length, thickness and colour, hanging from a top band or cross-bar. (See Fig. 1). Though mainly intended for purposes of enumeration, there are instances of

27. A totem is a character, generally pictorial, employed by savage peoples to indicate the clan, gens or family to which an individual belongs. "The custom is almost universal among savage tribes to select the form of some animal, fish or bird, as a totem to distinguish between the different clans and families. These totems are tattooed on the body in brilliant colours or painted upon the possessions of the family clan." (Julius E. Lips, op. cit., p. 23.)

28. The most interesting symbol for private ownership is the Babylonian figure of an arrow or spear with four crossed lines cut on the shaft ——— (Mason, op. cit., p. 255) which meant first possession and then name (proper), "a reminiscient picture of a most archaic custom."
Fig. 1. Peruvian Quipus
historical events or edicts being conveyed through these means. Some tribes used notched sticks, others shells and beads as aids to memory, "much the same as the modern rosary or abacus". A staggering instance of mnemonic record was the "revenue book" of Hawaii, "which consisted of a rope four hundred fathoms long, divided into sections, corresponding to the various districts of the country. Each section of the rope was the complete record of the tax collector, who by means of loops, knots and tufts of different shapes and colours kept a correct account of the personal property of the people." In the middle ages when learning was confined to the priests and to a lesser extent to the courtiers, in some parts of England, people in the rural areas, remote from the churches, employed notched sticks called 'clogs' or 'almanacs' to remember holy days. (See Fig. 2). The North American Indians employed some unique devices such as the Wampum and the Calumet or the reed "peace-pipe". In the Wampum we have a close approach to picture-writing. It was a broad belt made of shell or beads set in patterns portraying objectively or by metaphor or in a quite conventional manner the matter to be recorded. (See Figs. 3, 4 and 5). The patterns were meant to be "memory jogs" so that in a way the Wampum served as a mnemonic pictograph; and as it was commonly employed, a man with a sound memory would be appointed to keep such records. Once a year they were to be produced before the entire tribe and

29. Some other ancient peoples (in China and Tibet) and some primitive tribes of the present day, such as the Li of Hainan, the Santals of Bengal, some tribes of the Japanese Riukiu islands, the Polynesian islands of Central and Western Africa, California and Southern Peru, have also employed knotted cords and similar mnemonic devices. In the Solomon Islands, in the Carolines, in the Palaus and the Marquesan islands, strings with knots and loops are still used for the exchange of news. (Diringer, The Alphabet, p.26.)

Marco Polo wrote of the inhabitants of the Zardande Yunnan, China: "They have no letters, but make their contracts and obligations by tallies of wood, one-half whereof one keepeth, and the other which being afterwards paid, the tally is destroyed." (See Mason, op. cit., p. 31.)

30. "The weak point in the system was that each division collector had to "go along" with the record to explain and interpret it!" (Ibid, p. 35.)

31. "They were square blocks of wood notched on the four edges with the days of the week, the seventh notch being a long one. On one side of each edge, which included three months, lines from the notches bore dots or geometric marks indicating cycles of the moon. On the adjacent side, lines drawn from notches corresponding to church festivals, fasts and saints' days, bore characters symbolical of these holy days." (Ibid., p. 36)
the precise import of each was to be publicly narrated. Yet despite all this elaborate precaution, misinterpretations, consequent conflicts and wars were too common to let this system have any lasting value. 32

SECTION II
Pictographs

We have so far, attempted a brief survey of the nascent attempts of primitive men to get over the difficulties of speech so that communication could be less perishable. But all these varied devices invented by them have been rightly grouped under ‘embryo-writing’ to be distinguished from true writing. Obviously therefore, our main concern should be the study of the latter; and to begin with, that is, pictography. In a way pictography is the boundary between writing and art, so that to view it in a wider perspective we should consider some of the theories put forward by historians of art. Many scholars tend to believe that the theory of sympathetic magic has largely explained the purpose of all primitive art. Yet, what was at the back of the minds of these artists would seem to defy mangling by preconceived theories. In her book Paintings and Engravings, (Tr. by Eleanor Frances Armstrong) 33, Mlle Annate Laming-Las Caux “has thought out along her own lines the reasons which may have prompted cave artists to acquire and develop their skill in order to be able to devote their time to decorating almost inaccessible areas of rock space. She joins issue, indeed, with Abbe Breuil, for she is not prepared to accept hunting, ritual and the practice of sympathetic magic as being sufficient explanations either of the choice or the number of the animals represented, or of the surfaces chosen for decoration, or of the seemingly casual

32. Worn sometimes as an ornament or girdle, it was also used as money. (Diringer, op. cit. p. 28.)

33. “The ideas of writing and drawing were identical in prehistoric Egypt and in early Greece, as it is shown by the Egyptian word s.tj and by Greek graphein, which mean both ‘writing’ and ‘drawing’.” (Diringer, ipid., p. 25).

“As far as history reaches, in every direction, the beginnings of writing seem to have been laid in pictorial art”. (W.A. Mason, op. cit., p.40.)

The remarkable drawing and paintings of cave men of central Europe who lived at the close of the last glacial period in Europe) which abound in artistic excellence, are frankly regarded as picture-writing by Dr. Arthur J. Evans who interprets them as records of events.
Fig. 3. The peon Treaty Belt. Given by the Indians to William Pena.
superimposed drawings. Mlle Laming draws attention to what she considers intelligibly obvious group compositions and argues that such groups are incompatible with the theory of sympathetic magic which depends on the supposition that each animal or figure was painted separately according to the needs of the hunt. More over, she rules out the alternative theory of these cave paintings being products of an anecdotal animal art on grounds of unnatural animal associations between certain animals within these groups. * * * It is therefore idle to conclude that these drawings and paintings represent one definite trend to the exclusion of all others or that all primitive art, irrespective of the factors of time and place, could be explained in terms of any single theory, however cogent it may seem to be. There is, indeed, no logical or historical necessity for any exclusive motive. Thus it is not improbable that primitive art has been permeated by many complementary factors. It may commemorate actual events or record instructions and directives to be carried out and essay as well dreamy visions of unfulfilled yearnings.

"However, picture-writing even in its elementary stage is more than a picture. It differs from picturing, which is the beginning of pure pictorial representation or art, from the fact that it is the utilitarian beginning of written language, aiming to convey to the mind not the pure representation of an event, but a narrative of the event, each notion, or idea being expressed by a little picture or sketch, which we term pictograph. The distinction is important, for the change from embryo-writing to picture writing implies an immense progress in the art of perpetuating or transmitting thought". * * * The change must have come about very early considering the pace of development from the Aurignasan cave drawings (of 20,000 to 30,000 years ago) which clearly show that people had acquired the mental trick of isolating the element of shape, and later those of colour, number etc. from their general impressions of animals.

34. See The Times Literary Supplement, May. 29. 1959, p. 316.
See also review of the same book in The Listener, May. 7, 1959, p. 812.
But it is doubtful whether in the evolution of writing we can distinguish between two distinct phases as the aesthetic and the utilitarian, for they seem to be inextricably fused together. Gordon Childe particularly stresses that the fact of the priestly origination of writing far from disproving the utilitarian theory only confirms it further for “the Sumerian priests invented writing not in their capacity of ministers of superstition but in that of administrators of a worldly estate. They, like Egyptian and Minoan scribes, used the invention not for magical or liturgical purposes but for practical business and administration”.

While this is true, it does not take into cognizance the possibility of the prior existence of pictures, as such, whose raison d’être may not have been narration of events, and yet may have inspired the subsequent utilitarian picture writing. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, the birth of writing may not be wholly attributable to practical needs, though such needs may have been the immediate forces engendering it. There is at least one strong ground for this belief: the evolution of writing shows an unmistakable direction viz., from the decorative to the plain, and throughout, the more thoroughly utilitarian writing is meant to be, the plainer it becomes.

When all evidence definitely establishes this uniform course in the development of writing, it should not be futile to study this evolution in the reverse and infer an original stage of pictures as such, pure and simple, the main concern behind which may not have been plain practical communication. If this stage can be considered a historical fact, then, writing has had an aesthetic and not an utilitarian origin.

The subsequent development of writing presents no great difficulty; according to A.C. Haddon, the stages through which alphabet writing has passed are:

37. *Man Makes Himself*, p. 185. “It is no accident that the oldest written documents of the world are accounts and dictionaries. They disclose the severely practical needs that prompted the invention of Sumerian Script.” (Ibid., p. 184).

38. See, ante, p. 11 for the quotation from Diringer.


39a. We have incidentally emphasised it here so that advocates of utilitarianism supported by substantial but later evidence may not wholly miss it.

40. *Evolution in Art*, pp. 216-7
INTRODUCTORY

(a) *Pictographs*—Pictures or actual representation of objects.

(b) *Ideograms*—Pictorial symbols which are used to suggest objects or abstract ideas.

*Phonograms*—Graphic symbols of sounds. They have usually arisen out of conventionalised ideograms, which have been taken to represent sounds instead of things.

(c) Verbal signs, representing entire words.

(d) Syllabic signs which stand for articulation of which words are composed.

(e) Alphabetic signs or letters, which represent the elementary sounds into which the syllable can be resolved.

Since pictography is the most natural and direct means of written communication it must have originated independently among different peoples and thus, as Haddon observes, there is no single system of pictography. "In the vast majority of cases a native interpreter is required to explain the exact significance of the figures, or of the events which they commemorate. Once explained, the representations are found to be sufficiently appropriate." 45

Quite often, particularly in the earliest days of pictography, "the pictures simply recalled the objects to the mind; the special and particular meaning of the record had to be devised through a process of mental equation." 46 Even later a good number of signs, occurring, as for instance, along with hieroglyphic words, graphically picture human or animal forms or their parts. Thus,

41. *Ibid.*, p. 212. "Symbols are less obvious and more artificial than signs, they are usually conventional, and are not only abstract, but metaphysical, and often need explanation from history, religion and customs. They do not depict but suggest objects; do not speak directly through the eye to the intelligence, but presuppose in the mind knowledge of an event or fact which the sign calls. The symbols of the ark, dove, olive-branch and rainbow would be the cross and the crescent to those ignorant of history." (quoted from Garrick Mallery, *Sign Language among North American Indians*, *First American Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, 1879-80 (1881).

42. See preceding footnote.

43. See Supra fn. 80 from the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, (quotation).


45. *Ibid*.

beside the word spelt fully with the proper phonetic hieroglyphs there is a pictorial index sign "more fully to define its meaning." Thus while in simple pictography, any figure stands for the object it represents, and its real meaning may be easily guessed, in complex representations, as they go beyond mere imitation there is great difficulty to discriminate their true import. A good knowledge of the signs, symbols and determinatives used is necessary for any correct interpretation. E. B. Tylor illustrates this problem well:—"When the tortoise is put to represent land, it is no longer a mere imitation but has become an emblem or symbol. And where the bird is drawn to mean not a real king-fisher, but a man of that name, we see the first step toward phonetic writing or sound writing, the principle of which is to make a picture stand for the sound of a spoken word. How man may have made the next move toward writing may be learnt from the common child's game of rebus, that is writing words 'by things.' Like many other games, this one keeps up in child's sport what in earlier ages was man's earnest. Thus if one writes the word "waterman" by a picture of a water-jug and a man, this is drawing the meaning of the word in a way hardly beyond the American Indian's picture of the king-fisher. But it is very different when in a child's book of puzzles one finds the drawing of a water-can, a man being shot, and a date-fruit, this representing in rebus the word 'can-di-date.' For now what the pictures have come to stand for is no longer their meaning, but their mere sound. This is true phonetic writing, though of a rude kind, and shows how the practical art of writing really came to be invented."

47. For instance: 'to dance' by a girl dancing; 'to rest' by a recumbent figure; 'to ascend' by a person walking upstairs; 'judgement' by an eye; 'wonder' by a man with his hands upstretched. (See Mason, op. cit., p.22).

48. Ibid., pp.215–16. "In attempting to decipher pictographs not only is it necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the people who made them, but it must be borne in mind that characters substantially the same, or 'homomorphs' (to use Colonel Mallery's term) made by one set of people have, a different signification among others. Further, differing forms ('symmorphs') for the same general conception or idea may occur. It is usually comparatively easy for any one to get a meaning out of a pictograph, but it is quite a different matter whether that was the meaning which the inscriber intended to convey."

Fig. 6. Bison and Man. Hunting scene. Obverse and reverse. From Laugerie Basse, Dordogne, France.
Fig. 7. Reindeer carved on a piece of antler from a cave near Thayngen, Switzerland.
Amidst the best instances of pictograph are the drawings and paintings of the palaeolithic cave droppers of Central Europe. "Contemporaneous with Arctic and Semi Arctic animals long since extinct" they could still have such artistic excellence that nothing can compare with "the rare fidelity to nature of the drawings to which these rude men cut with flints or painted with coloured earths or vegetable dyes upon the rocky walls of their caves, or carved upon their crude stone implements or with better skill etched with delightful naivette upon the bones of now extinct' animals, ages before metals were used or ever known."50 Their numerous drawings portray the mammoth (see Fig. 6), bison, ox, reindeer, hyena, cave bear and the horse, "which with its erect mane and zebra-like characteristics gives further evidence, were it needed, of the vast prehistoric antiquity of their art."51 The incomparable drawing of the reindeer, reproduced here, is carving on a piece of reindeer antler found in a cave near Thayngen, Switzerland. (See Fig. 7). All these drawings are "replete with realism and for spirit and dash are well nigh unexcelled."52 Dr. Arthur J. Evans straightaway calls them picture-writing looking upon them as records of events, primarily of the chase, their principal occupation.53

At Lascaux, the cave paintings of the Aurignacian period show principally a giant aurochs; the entire animal is painted in "admirably vigorous strokes, but the head is the greatest masterpiece." There are a number of horses, with prominent manes and short legs, similar to those of other caves. One scene depicts a wild mare and foal hunted by bowmen, a scene full of life and movement.54

There are naturalistic representations by palaeolithic men, in Eastern Spain, giving us a good idea of their way of life with its principal occupation of hunting. "A large number of their pictures are full of excitement and animation." The fighting scene from Galeria del Roble as well as the galloping horse shows, as Leouhard Adams says, "one characteristic feature of Stone

50. Mason, op. cit., p. 41.
51. Ibid., p. 42.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., cited on p. 43.
54. Leouhard Adams, Primitive Art, p. 79.
Age Painting at its highest development: concentration on what is absolutely essential and omission of all unnecessary detail." And as he believes the original purpose of this and other similar pictures may not have been aesthetic, but rather pictographic.  

Many of the drawings in the Atlas Mountains may well belong to a period earlier than the Neolithic, as is shown, for instance, by the figures of the giant buffalo (Bubalus antiquus) which by then, it is believed, had become extinct. Adams holds that the drawings of elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes and ostriches, which are no longer in the northern areas, must belong to the time when there was a considerably warmer climate in the Atlas region. In central Sahara paintings happen to be more common. "The style is naturalistic, animated" and "of particular interest are several polychrome paintings in the Tassili mountains representing graceful human figures dappled cattle close by." The French Ahaggar expedition discovered in 1935 another site to the South-West of this region "with the same kind of polychrome wall paintings, showing various animals, but chiefly cattle. A few human figures are distinguished by extraordinarily animated and often graceful movements."  

55. Leouhard Adams, op. cit., pp. 79—80. He observes earlier: "I think it will be generally agreed that we are completely unconscious of the lack of perspective. Is there indeed a lack of perspective at all? Does it not appear as if the artist had looked down from a high rock on this handful of men attacking each other from bows and arrows? And in that case would not the representation meet even our demands in the matter of perspective." p.79  

56. Ibid., pp. 80—81.  
57. Ibid., p. 82.  
58. Ibid., p. 84.  
59. Ibid., p. 85. Count de Chasceloup recognises a striking similarity between Ahaggar paintings on one hand and Bushman art and the art of Ancient Egypt on the other and suggests the Ahaggar plateau as the original home of this art. Commenting on this Leouhard Adams observes: "We can trace the development of Egyptian paintings in Egypt itself from very primitive beginnings. As far as we know strong influences have spread in exactly the opposite direction—that is from Egypt to the West and South-west, but even this took place in the dynastic period, and not in pre-historic times. In the Atlas region the engraved figures of bulls and rams with sun discs between their horns show an obvious influence, but they are not older than the New Stone Age, and may be even more recent. The paintings of Ahaggar plateau, then, appear to be only a link—though probably the most beautiful one—in the chain of Saharan art centres parallel in age to pre-dynastic and dynastic Egypt." Ibid., p. 85.
The paintings of the Bushmen of South Africa depict hunting scenes in which elephants, long haired bovines, lions, antelopes and other wild animals are found. One fine instance of Bushman painting shows a herd of ostriches of different colours. "A close inspection, however, reveals that one of the birds has 'human' legs, and peeping out from among the feathers a bow and arrow can be seen." This 'bird' is a bushman, out on a hunt, and to be able to get to the proximity of the birds, has disguised himself, putting on an ostrich skin. When George W. Stow showed a copy of this picture to a modern bushman he could readily explain: "Ostriches, three black males two blue females. The 'Nussy Bushmen' not the 'Kham Bushmen are said to hunt in Ostrich skins." 60 The Bushman paintings show attempts at perspective through fore-shortening, though some exhibit difficulties therein; they further depict the profile, the front view and, above all, the back view. One of the finer specimens shows both the animals, and the hunters are drawn with appreciable care for form and perspective. 61

We have no doubt that these drawings were made for the purpose of record, "the only kind known to these savages in their backward stage." Mason observes, that they exhibit "a high degree of proficiency in the elemental art of drawing." 62

In Siberia too, rock art is common, consisting of engravings or pecked drawings and paintings. One rock drawing shows 63 hunters with bows and arrows and two naked men, one with a spear. The antiquity of these pictures is not above controversy, and while a very early date may be held quite reasonable, some of them definitely belong to a much later period, about the first millennium A.D. But many recent finds have been made by Soviet archaeologists and there is no doubt that palaeolithic art existed in the Asian countries of the Soviet Union, especially in Siberia. Female statuettes similar to those of the Auringnasian period of Europe have occurred in the Russian plains, Malta.

61. Ibid., p. 93.
62. See A History of the Art of Writing, p. 44.
63. Discovered near Abansk in the Minusinsk district.
Yakutsk in Eastern Siberia and in Uzbekistan.64 As regards the Yakutsk rock pictures, Prof. Okladnikov’s team (which investigated about eighty prehistoric sites and groups of rock pictures) believes that they belong to the Bronze and Iron Ages and partly to the Neolithic and Palaeolithic periods too.65 Miss Tatyana Passek, Secretary of the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, hails the cliffs near the village of Shiskino, on the Lena river as a museum of primitive art; she observes that “in many places, over a stretch of a kilometer and a half the cliffs are completely covered with drawings.”66 The most interesting piece, according to her, is a life size drawing of a wild horse in red paint, resembling similar drawings in palaeolithic caves in Western Europe.67 Another instance of rock art is the Surukhtaakh Khaya cliff which is covered with drawings representing ‘witch doctors, reindeer, cupolo-like structures and various symbols.’68 The piece of the rock art from this region according to Leouhard Adams may be only a rough sketch, perhaps not quite accurate. He holds that it is not palaeolithic or neolithic art, but apparently belongs to the Bronze Age. “However incomplete the section illustrated here may be, at least one typically primitive feature is quite distinct, viz., ‘X-ray’ vision; that is to say, the representation of the inner parts of a body. This is one of the several characteristics which ancient Siberian art has in common with North west American art and other American art styles.”69 What has been called ‘X-ray’ vision may have played a vital role in the development of pictography and ideography; Leouhard Adams rightly regards it as the highest development of ‘intellectual’ as opposed to optical vision. His further remarks are quite opposite to the

64. I have followed the account of prehistoric art in Siberia and Central Asia given in Leouhard Adams, Primitive Art, (1954).

65. According to Leouhard Adams if the latter date is correct it must be the upper palaeolithic as far as the rock art is concerned. (Ibid., p.112).

66. Ibid., cited on p. 112.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., p. 113. The Surukhtaakh Khaya cliff is on the river Markha, a northern tributary of the river Vilyui, which is itself a tributary of the Lena. The site lies between 110° and 120° E. Long. and in about 65° N. Lat.

69. Ibid. p. 114.
evolution of writing also: "The accentuation of certain features in a figure often leads to the disregard of others, so that realistic representation is gradually abandoned. It is eventually replaced by symbolism where a few characteristic traits suffice to convey the idea of an object, and may be stylized and transformed into conventional signs. In an extreme stage of development an isolated claw and a single wing may symbolize a raven." 70

HIEROGLYPHICS

It cannot be decided, with the evidence at our command whether hieroglyphic or cuneiform writing is older. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that the development of the hieroglyph was parallel with the cuneiform, the Chinese, Mayan and other transitional scripts. Nevertheless some are of opinion that the entire script was artificially created at the time of the unification of Egypt under the first Dynasty. 71 It is true that the Egyptians had their fully developed system of writing even in the time of Menes, the first king of the First Dynasty, whose date according to Flinders Petrie is 4777 B.C. The words by then had a purely phonetic value and were regularly spelt out instead of being indicated by ideograms alone. 72 The purely pictographic stage had been passed and "remains a matter of inference." 73 But scholars who dispute the pictorial origin of the hieroglyphs hold "that the ancient names of the characters became obsolete so early that explanation for their phonetic value is discoverable even in the oldest inscriptions." 74 It is too much to believe that the hieroglyphs suddenly dawned on the people out of a vacuum, as it were. The primitive Egyptian ideograms are remarkably similar to the Ojibwa and Chinese symbols, 75 and the analogy of the evolution of other scripts can, by no means, be neglected. The theory of 'idea-diffusion' or stimulus-diffusion'

70. Primitive Art, pp. 37—38.
71. Diringer, op. cit., p. 58.
73. Ibid.
74. Primitive Art, p. 211.
75. Ibid.
according to which the script did not evolve gradually, but was
invented by someone "who knew already of the existence of
writing" is an attractive speculation. Holding that this sugges-
tion is perhaps right, Diringer still admits that it is very difficult
of proof." In the absence of earlier records unfolding the
evolution of the hieroglyphs the only legitimate thing to do is to
suspend our judgement, waiting to learn more.

However Egyptian writing may have originated, there is little
doubt that in its final stage it antedated the Pyramids "by many
centuries of advanced culture." 77 "The earliest attempts at
uniting must have preceded the Pyramids by a tremendous length
of time if, as the evolutionary theory holds, the hieroglyphs had
passed through the usual stages of primitive pictographs, ideogra-
phic characters and rebus writing, parallel to the stages of
cuneiform writing. The hieroglyphic inscriptions represent the
same mode of writing as those of 3000 years later. "Nevertheless,
the cautious scholars consider the few ancient documents extant
...........as a pure pictorial representation, namely as a picture only,
and not as crude pictography, that is as picture writing or as
transition from pictography to ideographic script, while the
majority regard the documents as important evidence of the
various initial stages in the development of hieroglyphic writing." 78

In the Rosetta stone inscription, the earliest to be deciphered
by Champollion, the characters are quite pictorial. The
translation of the inscription here shows that the characters are
largely phonetic signs, though purely ideographic signs are also
found. The defect with phonograms is that they cannot precisely
represent homonyms, especially monosyllabic words which have
significations, though pronounced alike. In order exactly to

76. Diringer, op. cit., p. 58.
77. "The greater part of existing edifices upon the ancient soil appear
to be not first essays, but the renaissance of the art of a civiliza-
tion that had been interrupted by an invasion of barbarians
anterior to the year 2000 before the Christian era. The inscriptions
which decorate these monuments show us, in effect, the hierogy-
lphic writing already as complete in form as the last sculptured
writings of the Egyptians of the second and third centuries after
Christ" (Champollion quoted in Mason, op. cit., pp. 186-7.)
indicate which particular word is intended, it is necessary to add a determinative or explanatory ideogram." However, this mixture of ideographs and phonographs in this and other Egyptian inscriptions as well as in Mexican picture writing according to the *Encyclopaedia Americana* does not prove the absolute precedence of ideographs.

"In our own system we use figures and other symbols when phonographic signs are too slow for our purpose, and with a less perfect phonographic system this would naturally occur much more frequently. It does not appear, moreover, that any transition from pictorial to phonetic writing is necessary through arbitrary non-phonetic symbols. Both of these modifications would no doubt proceed simultaneously from independent causes. Pictorial signs not phonetized would be abbreviated as well as phonetized signs and when the phonetized abbreviations came to prevail the non-phonetized abbreviations would be phonetized also, thus producing the appearance of a transition from arbitrary symbols to phonetic signs."  

Writing about the development of the syllabic and alphabetic signs in Egypt, Mason suggests that long before the final invention

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79. "Thus, if a figure of the stork represented the bird, the same with a flower or some leaves by its side would indicate a stalk, and a pair of legs by the side of another bird would determine the action of stalking". (A.C. Haddon, *Evolution in Art*, pp. 217-18)


"Nothing is easier than to make a rude pictorial representation of certain objects. To draw something resembling a man would be easier than to agree on a sign to represent the word man, hence ideographs would naturally precede phonetic symbols. But for the same reason, the earliest systems of writing would not be purely ideographic, but mixed. There are many things which from the subject of the least sophisticated human communications which cannot be represented pictorially. When writing was first practised these things were already represented by words, and the idea would naturally occur to form a sign to represent the word, that is, a phonetic sign. These signs could not be directly pictorial, but they might be allegorical or symbolic, and in the absence of analysis of sound they probably would take that form, although the direct intention was to suggest conventionally a specific word by the symbol. This sort of symbol might be called mnemonic. From such symbols to merely arbitrary syllabic and alphabetic symbols the transition would be easy." (Ibid.)
of alphabetic signs a good number of syllabic symbols had been in
vogue to express the phonetic values of monosyllabic words and
symbols. These syllabic signs probably had been chosen from
among the simplest or the commonest ideograms of mono-syllabic
or polysyllabic words and used thereafter in writing as the phonon-
grams of the initial syllables in these words: “The difference in
use then was that the symbol which formerly was employed to
indicate the name of an object or idea was later used as the sign
for the sound of the first syllable of this name whenever it
occurred in writing any polysyllabic word whatever.”

The Hu-nefer Papyrus reads from above downwards and
to the right in the nine vertical columns and then continues in the
the longitudinal columns from left to right, interrupted by
pictures and vignettes throughout its entire length. “Though
the progression of the writing in the hieroglyphs is downward in
the vertical columns and from left to right as the columns run, in
each long horizontal line where there is more than one hieroglyph
the reading is from right to left.” While the general belief is
that the Egyptians had the world’s first alphabet and there is
no doubt that they had evolved it before 4000 B.C., it will be
seen that they failed to make independent use of the alphabetic
signs and it passes one’s understanding why they just stopped
short of the final stage. The hieroglyphs consist of alphabetic,
syllabic and ideographic signs jumbled up often in the same word
and further the same word could be represented by different
signs. As Haddon observes pithily, “when a name was alphabeti-
cally written a phonogram was added to explain it and an
ideogram (or pictograph) was added to explain the phonogram.
The word as finally written was an accretion of various stages in
its own evolution.”

The different signs for the same alphabetic sound were
employed “according to the sentiment, implication and in some

81. *Mason, op. cit., p. 214. “For instance, the sign pet occurring several
times in the inscription of Hu-nefer was originally the ideogram
for ‘heaven’ pet. Later it was used as the sign for the syllable pet
in any other word whenever it occurred.”

82. Ibid., p. 203.

Fig. 8. a. Symbols representing things shown
b. Ideographs representing actions associated with things shown.
c. Symbols representing abstract ideas.
Fig. 9.A  Hieroglyphic determinatives
Fig. 9-B  Hieroglyphic bi-consonantal signs.
cases the delicacy of the context". Vowels came first, but they were mostly disguised sounds. A large number of these alphabetic signs as well as hieroglyphs, as we have seen, were pictorial; and Champollion has classified the hieroglyphic characters thus: heavenly bodies, the human figure and its parts, domestic and wild animals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, plants, fruits, flowers, clothing, furniture, armour, utensils, instruments, buildings, geometric forms and grotesque images. In their alphabet one finds the eagle, reed, extended arm, chicken, leg, shutter, snail, owl, flowing water, mouth, lion, twisted cord, shovel, tank, bowl, altar, cap, hand, tongs and the serpent, not to speak of the numerous duplicate signs and syllabic symbols.

The employment of hieroglyphic characters was three fold: (a) word signs (Fig. 8); (b) phonograms and phonetic complements; and (c) determinatives (Fig. 9). The use of bare word signs being uncommon, phonograms were formed usually out of the bare root of their parent words. "Egyptian writing like the later Semitic alphabets, expressed consonants only, and as practically there was no need for three consonantal phonograms, the phonograms were bi-consonantal, (Fig. 10) or uniconsonantal. The origin of some of them continues to be

84. Mason, op. cit., p. 206. "For example in the case of the letter L, if it occurred in the name of man, the "lion" was used; in the name of a queen the "lotus" was employed. There were twenty different A's to choose from, thirty H's and many different duplicates of nearly every letter in their Alphabet. (Ibid., pp. 206-7).

85. "The first vowel, the 'eagle' was hardly a, but a more breathing." (Ibid., p. 207).

86. Ibid., p. 208

87. A few additional alphabetic and syllabic signs in frequent use were crane, battlement, hoe, stylus, stick, plants, feather, lasso, whip and the plan of a house. This list practically constitutes a secondary alphabet; yet there were numerous other symbols too, which the Egyptians used as Mason observes aptly "for the sake of variety as we use different words of the same meaning to avoid repetition and redundancy". (Ibid., p. 209).


89. "As the legs drawn forward or backward to indicate 'going' or 'coming', or bent to indicate 'jumping', the eye with drops to indicate 'crying' or 'grief' or two eyes to indicate 'seeing'; the ear to indicate 'hearing'; the tongue 'speaking'; the hand holding a vase to
obscure, while in a few instances there is a case for more than one origin, and in some others it cannot be definitely said whether acrophony played any considerable part; in the majority of cases, single consonants came to be denoted by symbols representing certain objects whose names (some of which had already fallen into disuse in very ancient times) contained prominently the consonant in question or, for reasons of phonetic decay were reduced to one syllable only. "However, that may be, the hieroglyphic writing contained twenty-four uni-consonantal signs." 90 Diringer wonders if the uniconsonantal signs constituted an alphabet. 91 It is true, as he states, that the most important phonograms were these uniconsonantal signs. Nevertheless, for reasons already outlined, these signs failed to have an effective alphabetic status; at best they may have constituted a quasi-alphabet. 92

Mason suggests three stages in the development of Egyptian writing:— 93

(1) Representative or imitative signs:—pictorial representations which subsequently became conventionalised and laid the foundation for the determinative ideograms used later;

(2) Symbolic signs: when it became necessary to portray actions, motives and sentiments are scribes resorted to (a) synecdoche—using a significant part instead of the whole of the figure 94 (b) metonymy portraying

indicate 'offering'; two arms holding a paddle meaning 'to convey'; or an arm holding a shield meaning 'combat'; and many similar symbols. (Mason, op. cit., p. 213).

90. Diringer, op. cit., pp. 60-61
91. Ibid., p. 63.
92. "Even if we agreed that the Egyptians had acquired an 'alphabet,' we should conclude that they did not know how to use it. As a matter of fact, in practice they did not employ it when they could use word-signs or multi-consonantal phonograms, and they never employed it without determinatives i.e., signs which were not to be read, but served simply as guides to the sense of the word; thus the alphabetic signs needed to be guided". (Ibid.)
94. Ibid., p. 213.
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Fig. 10. Hieroglyphic phonograms
cause for effect and vice-versa employing the instrument to represent the effect produced (c) metaphor, representing an idea by a resemblance, real or fancied to the properties of some object.

(3) Phonetic signs: one may surmise two stages in this last period of the evolution of Egyptian hieroglyphs, viz., syllabic or alphabetic phoneticism, though we have no evidence as to which is prior.

The hieroglyphs were used for inscriptions of a monumental character and as they had to last long writing was of the kind of 'elaborately drawn, carved or painted pictures of objects.' But for business, literary and epistolary purposes, in view of the need for speed, hieroglyphic writing was wholly unsuitable, and so a cursive form adopted from hieroglyphs was used. It has been named hieratic (sacred or 'priestly') as it was mainly used by priests, in contradistinction to the demotic (demos = people) writing of the common run of people, which, however, was a much later offshoot. Döringer observes: "while the hieratic signs in their most cursive forms hardly retained any clear trace of the original hieroglyphic pictures, in fact they were only cursive transcriptions, sign by sign, of hieroglyphic symbols. In practice, however, many single signs were linked together by the sweep of the brush and so ligatured groups were formed."

A kind of hieratic writing existed even in the period of the First Dynasty; but as it developed, it became obscure and with the emergence of the demotic writing in the seventh century B.C., it virtually became the script of the priests employed for transcribing religious texts and the like. The demotic was a highly cursive offshoot of the hieratic "and like it, as a symbol of writing was not more advanced than hieroglyphic since it was neither syllabic

95. As the sun to represent day or time; the moon to represent a month; the pictures of the various implements used in writing to indicate the act of writing etc. (Mason, op. cit., p. 213.)

96. As a book to represent 'knowledge'; a lute, 'goodness,' an eye 'judgement'; a crocodile, 'evil'; a bee, 'king'; or the head of a line to indicate 'superiority.' (Ibid.)

97. Article in the Encyclopaedia Americana, cited earlier.

98. The Alphabet, p. 64.

P—4
nor alphabetic. Its script thus consisted mainly of word-signs, phonograms and determinatives. Yet externally and in addition whole associated groups of hieratic characters were fused by ligatures into single demotic signs. Demotic writing developed over a period of four hundred years and received its stereotyped form in the fourth century B.C. It is written from right to left and it is by no means easy to read. As Diringer says the main difficulty lies not in the language, but in the script. During the Ptolemaic period demotic gained importance over hieratic and became equal in status to Greek and hieroglyphic. Decrees, temporal and spiritual, were engraved in triplicate, in hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek versions. Its use continued till the end of the fifth century A.D.; some of the demotic signs, for sounds not expressible by Greek letters, were assimilated by coptic alphabet.

CUNEIFORM

Cuneiform was, so to say, the multi-national script of ancient times unlike the Egyptian systems of writing. The resuscitation of the lost languages of Mesopotamia is a romantic, yet solemn tale. Thanks to the efforts of Grotefend (in 1821), Rawlinson (in 1851) and others we have gained an insight into the genius behind the languages and their cuneiform script, so named, owing to the wedge-like character of the strokes of the writing. Many of the inscriptions so far found have been incised “on soft clay subsequently baked, with a blunt pointed instrument or stylus, probably the three-sided stem of a rush which produced these wedge-like marks.” There are inscriptions on slate, marble, alabaster and other stones too, but, “the wedges which were natural and incident to inscriptions in soft clay were copied in the stone and became the standard forms in the written syllabary however and wherever used.” The wedges are

100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. “The Egyptian scripts were essentially national.......; they originated in Egypt, they were employed only for Egyptian speech, they developed in Egypt and they died out in Egypt.” Ibid, p. 63.
104. Ibid., p. 233.
separated from one another, well arranged in precise groupings constituted by syllables, the script itself being syllabic. A careful observer will not fail to see the latent pictoriality of the syllabic signs. As Mason writes, "they were but the survivals of an extremely archaic script, linear and pictorial in its character, of which they were the direct lineal descendants." 104a The pictographs represented objects, both animate and inanimate. According to Professor Speiser "the property marks, the primitive prototypes of those which appear on the Mesopotamian cylinder seals, were the beginnings of the script out of which the cuneiform system arose." 105 It is well known that in the course of excavations in Mesopotamia the lower strata progressively showed the nature of the script to be essentially pictorial and finally we come across inscriptions in which the wedges have disappeared altogether, "and each sign is drawn in lines—no longer writing as we know it but veritable outline drawing." 106

In course of time the pictorial characters must have advanced further and thus arose a second stage in the development of cuneiform, namely that of symbols standing for abstract ideas. "As soon as the need for the representation of continuous discourse arose, it became evident that a number of the vital elements of speech, such as inflexions, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions or personal names; especially of foreigners, could not be represented by this means. Hence, the picture-symbols came to be used to represent not only objects or related abstract ideas, but also the phonetic value of words without any regard to their meaning as pictures. In other words the cuneiform writing became a rebus-writing; many symbols were "sound-pictures" or phonograms, symbolizing word-sounds as such, or "phonetic complements." 107

The Father Schiel Tablet,108 which is one of the oldest, exhibits characters wholly pictographic without any manifestation of convention. They are drawn upright in vertical columns and are

105. Diringer, op. cit., p. 43.
107. Diringer, op. cit., p. 43.
108. The inscriptions have been generally named after the discoverers.
to be read downward and from right to left (as indicated) by the numbers at the top of the tablet. The first column is occupied by the proper name ‘Garduengub’ spelt with phonetic and syllabic characters as proper names and cannot be pictured otherwise. Similarly in the ‘Monuments Blau’ the characters have just begun to progress beyond the ideographic stage and there is a combination of written characters and pictorial drawings. In the Hoffman tablet as well as in the collection of Babylonian tablet in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, one character occurs three times, each time drawn differently. And as in the ‘Monuments Blau’ “the characters are not placed above each other nor in vertical registers, but are disposed for the most part horizontally, reading from right to left along the horizontal lines rather than downward.”

The cuneiform symbols had an extensive range of expression; there were polyphones as well as homophones. As the latter had similar phonetic values but represented different objects, clarity in communication had to be provided by determinatives, that is signs placed beside the words to be clarified, and yet not pronounced. The determinative indicated the meaning of a word by denoting precisely the class to which the object belongs. “In general the same cuneiform sign might stand for a simple syllable or vowel, or it might express a whole idea or word by itself, or yet again it might indicate only the class in which the particular word was being employed.” However, in the gradual process of simplification the pictures were conventionalized and thus only the bare features necessary for ready identification, happened to be retained; the script too became linear.

Thus a permanent change came over in the position of the signs and they were drawn on their sides in horizontal rows and

109. “The characters in Garduengub’s name really are pictures, or at least ideographs. The first one appears to be an early form of the symbol for ‘night’ and closely resembles the Chinese, Egyptian and Ojibwa symbols for night. The second character probably represents a covered pot: the third a throne: and the fourth obviously a human foot. The remainder of the inscription is written in characters probably largely ideographic” (Mason, op. cit., p. 239).

110. Ibid., p. 244.

111. Dirlenger, op. cit., p. 43.
as a result the reading was from left to right. The account given here is far too simple and short to bring home the immense vicissitudes and the numerous stages which had to be passed through before any stability could be gained.

The original signs, as Diringer points out, have not survived, as the people, perhaps, employed perishable materials, such as, wood or a kind of papyrus leaf. Early Mesopotamian writing survives on a few clay tablets where the signs already appear quite developed. "About 3200 B.C. some scribes found it convenient to turn the tablet in such a way that the pictographs appear lying on their back while in inscriptions on stone or metal the old position of the signs persisted for a few centuries more". Later the monumental inscriptions also adopted the system of the clay tablets and the signs came to be regularly turned at an angle of 90 degrees. (Fig. 10, Col. 2) "The change from the linear script to wedge shaped strokes (Fig. 10, Col. 3) was not a device deliberately chosen, but came about more or less by accident" occasioned by the use of the stylus. By Hammurabi's time, thus, conventionalization had advanced so far that the resemblance of the cuneiform characters, then well established,

113. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
114. Ibid., p. 48. "The Sumerians found themselves in a country abounding in clay, and in using it as a writing material, they soon discovered that one could draw a character in the wet clay—the written clay tablets or bricks being exposed to the sun and baked hard, so that the record became durable—much better and more quickly by impressing them than by scratching. On the other hand curves, circles and fine long lines could not be impressed satisfactorily, so that all these lines, curves and circles were replaced by combinations of short, straight, vertical, horizontal or oblique strokes or angles. These were impressed, line by line, with the edge of a broad headed stylus, consisting of a straight piece of stick of reed, bone, hard wood or metal. Assyrian monuments represent scribes holding the stylus in their closed fist and pressing upon the tablet. Naturally, the strokes impressed were thick on the top and on the left—the direction of writing being then from left to right—thus giving birth to a series of wedge-shaped characters, called by the users 'fingers'; and this peculiarity became more pronounced as time went on. The wedge-constructed characters, once they had been standardized, were cut on stone, metal, glass and other hard material." (Ibid.)
to their linear prototyoes may be discovered only by a practised eye, though the grouping of the cuneiform characters into forms traceable to the original ideographs was still apparent.\textsuperscript{116}

The cuneiform system, when simplified by the Assyrians still totalled about 570 signs, with some 300 of them in frequent use. Later the Assyrian cuneiform virtually became a syllabic script and the Persians, influenced by the Aramaic alphabet reduced it to a quasi-alphabetic system.\textsuperscript{116} The Medes added four vowel sounds to the twenty consonants recognised by them, and along with some other changes evolved about thirty-six or thirty-seven alphabetic and syllabic signs.\textsuperscript{117}

**CHINESE WRITING**

To a foreigner Chinese writing presents a strange sight; the reason, however, is not far to seek. The apparent modernity of most other modern scripts is conspicuous by its absence in Chinese writing. This modernity is after all their phonetic development; and Chinese writing is wholly different from them not only in the forms

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{115} Mason, op.cit., p. 263.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Diringer, op.cit., p. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{117} "The use of Sumerian characters to write Semitic names may have accelerated the conversion of ideographic into phonetic signs. But it complicated the result. A given sign is now liable to stand for one or more concepts, the sound of the Sumerian name of the concepts and the sound of the corresponding Semitic word. The complexity is much greater, since the same sign even in Sumerian might stand for several words, and so for several sounds. Probably Sumerians and Babylonians never felt any difficulty here, but for modern scholars the transliteration of Sumerian names into European alphabets is always difficult, and readings change. Within the last ten years, for instance ur.nina has been changed to Ur.nanshe, Ur.ensur to Ur.nammu and so on." (Gordon Childe, Man Makes Himself, p. 183.)
\item The ordinary Persian writing was identical with that of the Medes. A cuneiform alphabet, consisting of some thirty-six or thirty-seven forms, expressive of some twenty-three distinct sounds sufficed for the wants of the people, whose language was simple and devoid of phonetic luxuriance. Writing was from left to right as with the Aryan nations generally. Words were separated from one another by an oblique wedge; and were divided at any point at which the writer happened to reach the end of the line." (George Rawlinson, The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World, quoted in Mason, op. cit., p. 264.)
\end{itemize}
of its characters, but in their basic structure as it is still ideographic, though very much conventionalised. There is no systematic correspondence between the written characters and the sounds they represent. "The Chinese written language has no alphabet, for it has no spelling. It likewise has no visible parts of speech. The same character without change of form may be used as a noun, verb or adjective; all grammatical relations being indicated by position in the sentence. It is a language of roots and has no grammatical terminations to denote number, case, tense, person or other grammatical modifications. There are no inflections, the language being devoid of conjugation, declension and every form of grammatical construction. There are devices employed for indicating parts of speech, but they do not affect the drawing of the characters, which are made up of an old assortment of ideograms, phonograms and arbitrary symbols, often combined in the most illogical and whimsical manner."

The reason for the peculiarity of the script, as Diringer observes, lies in the language itself.¹¹⁸ The three kinds of human speech are the isolating, agglutinative and the inflecting. The Indo-European and the Semitic languages are familiar instances of the inflectional variety. Chinese belongs to the Tibeto-Chinese family of languages, which are partly agglutinative and partly isolating. Perhaps, Chinese, as such, was once an agglutinative speech, but is now isolating, that is, it does not contain terminations or other grammatical forms.¹¹⁹

"The old prefixes and suffixes having been worn away and having lost their significance are replaced by independent words without the possibility of a real inflexion. Thus, as a rule, if it is desired to modify the sense of a word in respect to time, place or other relation, this is not done by adding a prefix or suffix (that is by incorporation of a vowel or a syllable with the main word as it is done in the agglutinative languages) but by adding some other separate word having a meaning of its own. Therefore, the whole language as spoken in its many dialects and written in a number

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118. Mason, op. cit., p. 156.
119. Diringer, op. cit., p. 98.
120. Ibid.
of ways, consists of rudimentary monosyllables and compounds made from monosyllables."

The 'tones' in Chinese speech, an apparent obstacle to the foreigner, actually render the language easier. They are indeed vital to the speech, almost as important as the vowels. The same word uttered on a low pitch may mean one thing on a rising pitch another, and on the high pitch yet another. Some scholars, therefore, call Chinese and allied languages 'polytonic'. The Chinese syllables numbering about four hundred and fifty together make up some one thousand two hundred combinations, largely owing to these tones. And yet even these one thousand two hundred words should be hardly sufficient but for homonyms, that is words with same sounds but different meanings.

It would thus be clear that every distinct idea must have a separate sign peculiar to itself, and that every new idea would require a new symbol distinct from any of the old symbols. As the language developed, to represent complex ideas in writing special characters had to be evolved.

121. Diringer, op. cit., p. 98.

122. The number of tones vary from language to language and dialect to dialect.

123. "If these homonyms were to be written in alphabetic script, the ambiguity would certainly be much greater than it is in the present writing, in which, for example for the sound shih there are 239 characters (54, 40, 79 and 66 respectively for the different tones)........................ However, thanks to the means of variation (that is, the tones) each word is pronounced in a different musical note, and the Chinese language has been able to retain its power of expression. Another device which facilitates to understand the exact meaning is the employment of "synonym compounds," that is to say, pairs of words of similar meaning which make each other recognisable." (Diringer, op.cit., pp. 99-100.)

124. For instance an idea such as: "to announce the death of a parent or relative by the nearest mourners on the seventh day" was represented by the following character:

In this, the left hand character in the compound is, the sign 'to speak'; the right hand one is that for 'to divine.' The square shaped figure in the first character is the picture of the mouth, and is its written symbol. The four lines above it represent 'words.' All three signs are among the 214 radicals which form the basis of the written languages. The spoken word that stands for all this circumlocution is simply 'fu.' The character for the same
Fig. 11. Chinese gestures (1-2 command; 3-5 vow, oath; 6-9 refusal; 10 refuse to marry; 11 usurpation.)
Despite all these oddities, speaking from the standpoint of the evolution of the script itself it must be said that Chinese writing too was originally pictographic. Even the present day conventionalized script exhibits recognisable traces of its original pictographic nature, and this is particularly so as regards the construction of the characters. But the subsequent evolution of Chinese writing is not entirely along the lines of development of other scripts. As Mason observes, "it is not exactly ideographic nor is it purely phonetic. Many words are wholly ideographic and few are exclusively phonetic. It appears to be a system based on ideography advancing into phoneticism, but arrested at this stage." We have therefore to conclude that Chinese writing got stuck up in the 'transitional' stage. The question of the origin of Chinese writing is far from clear. The influence of Cuneiform has been suggested, but as Diringer remarks, this does not seem probable. Of course there are certain internal similarities, but they obtain among all ideographic scripts. Diringer holds that the theory of idea-diffusion gives us perhaps the right solution; but as we have already observed, that theory is still in the realm of speculation. Based on the same theory is the notion that some great Chinese personality, influenced by writing in Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley and elsewhere, must have invented Chinese writing. Traditional belief attributes writing to the influence of the eight mystic trigrams, *pa kua* (eight divination-diagrams), commonly employed in divinations, and the hexagrams derived from the trigrams or to the knot-device similar to the ancient Peruvian *quipus*. However that may be, the use of tally-sticks, the typical Chinese gestures (*Fig. 11*), ornamentation, ritual symbolism and similar factors must have definitely played an appropriate role in the evolution of the characters of Chinese writing.

_word 'fu' meaning father is a hand with two marks over it; being an illustration of the world-wide ethics of domestic responsibility._

(Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 157.)

127. See *ante*.
128. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 102
Mason suggests the following classification of the Chinese characters:

i. Hsiang hsing: Pictograms or hieroglyphs, which include all the characters representing the conventionalized rendering of primitive pictures, totalling some six hundred, of which two hundred and fourteen signs have been selected as keys or determinatives, the so-called radicals.

ii. Chih shih: Suggestive signs, representing ideas to the mind by the relative positions of the component parts of the signs: as the ideograph of the sun above a line—the horizon—to suggest the idea of 'morning'.

iii. Hui i: Combined ideograms: Characters made up of two or more of primitive signs so associated as to convey the meaning of the idea to the mind through the eye: as the sun and the moon to indicate 'light'; a mouth or a bird to indicate singing.

iv. Chuan chu: Inverted signs: Signs in which the meaning is conveyed by the inversion of the character of a significant change in position of its component parts—as the hands pointing to the right or the left to indicate these directions, or characters above or below a line to indicate these positions.

v. Chia chieh: Metaphysical or borrowed signs—compound signs which suggest a fanciful meaning borrowed from the association of signs in the character—as 'beautiful' represented by a woman and a bird; love by a woman and a child.

vi. Hsieh sheng: Phonograms—These constitute the mass of the written characters in the language. They are composed of different, specific, phonetic signs combined with one or more ideographic determinatives or 'radicals' to give the particular meaning and to distinguish between homophones. In writing, the Chinese do precisely as the Egyptians did: set the picture of the specific idea or thing intended—the ideograph—beside the phonogram to illustrate the particular meaning and differentiate from many other homonyms.

The radicals, called *tse-pu*, used, as we have seen, as determinatives may be classified into the following kinds:

1. Natural objects and phenomena.
2. Botanical and mineral objects:—wheat, rice, bamboo, salt, metal, stone, gems etc.
3. Zoological objects:—man including parts of the body, horse, dog, ox, tiger etc.
4. Utensils:—knife, spoon, vase, boat etc.
5. Actions:—to see, to eat, to touch, to walk slowly, to kill, to enter etc.
6. Qualities:—large, small, high, low, slender, black, perverse etc.

According to Diringer, there are two fields of development in the history of Chinese writing:

1) The external forms of the Chinese symbols and
2) The systematization of the Chinese characters.

The major changes in the shapes of the single symbols arose from the changes in the materials used for writing. For instance, when the narrow bamboo stylus was used to write on silk and slips of bamboo or wood, lines and curves could be easily traced and they were all of equal thickness. Bronze tools, shaped like the 'burin' or knives were employed for the engraved script. The use of the writing-brush called *pi*, made of elastic hair, exercised a good deal of influence on the formal evolution of the script. Curves virtually straightened, and the characters were made more conventional, 'obliterating' thus the likeness to the original pictures. Further development was initiated by the invention of paper in A.D. 105.

The main varieties of early Chinese writing are the *ku wen* or ancient figures; the *ta Chuan* or 'greater seal'; the *hsiao Chuan* or 'lesser seal' and *li shu* or 'official script'. There were


132. Five other kinds of Chinese writing said to have been employed under the Ch'in dynasty (221-206 B.C.) are the *k'o fu*, inscribed on tallies, the *ch'ung shu*, fanciful characters shaped like birds or insects, the *mu yin*, used for stamps or seals, and two varieties of the *shu shu*, one employed for official notices and the other used for inscriptions. Another style of writing, the *pa fen* lies midway between the *hsiao chuan* and *li shu* (*Ibid.*, p. 107).
many varieties of *li shu*, which developed in course of time. Apart from these, Chinese calligraphy knows many other forms, more than hundred ornamental scripts with fancy names.  

The systematization of Chinese characters should be given due importance in any survey of Chinese writing. What with the 'ideographic-transitional' nature of the script, and its many varieties which have evolved in the course of historical development, the vast territory of China and the poor means of communication, there was the "excessive multiplication of symbols including numerous useless, doubles, abbreviations, cursive varieties, faulty forms due to the ignorance of many scribes and so forth." In order to steer clear of this veritable jungle of symbols, Chinese scholars even in early times were particularly engaged in introducing some method in their writing. The main problem was classifying the written characters into groups according to their affinity. The earliest attempt was made in *Erh ya* compiled about the eleventh century B.C. In the third century B.C. Li Ssu published the official catalogue, *San ts'ang*, containing 3,300 characters. In the second century A.D. Hsü Shen brought out the lexicon, *Shuo wen*, improving on Li Ssu's catalogue and classifying the Chinese characters. He reproduced 10,516 symbols (of which 9,353 were simples and 1,163 doubles) under 540 rational keys or radicals (classifiers). With the sixth century A.D. commences the publication of phonetic dictionaries; classification was based on the sound and tone of the words. Since then phonetic dictionaries had been published, off and on, down to the eighteenth century A.D. when "K'ang-hsi (1662-1772) published his famous dictionary containing 44,449 Chinese characters classified under 214 keys only, the greater part of the symbols, more than 30,000 being either out of date or doubles or faulty signs."  

We have already noted the six-fold classification of Chinese characters followed by the Chinese lexicographers. The main difficulty in any study of Chinese writing is that it is not organically integrated with the language as such. As Diringer notes, it "represents the forgotten speech of several thousand

134. *Ibid*.
136. See *ante*
years ago. It appeals therefore to the eye rather than to the ear. The Chinese written language, notable for its richness of expression and flexibility, is in its rules of composition, its style and its vocabulary, far removed from the vernacular, which, besides, developed dialects so different that they are mutually almost unintelligible. Scholars who cannot understand each other’s speech can read the same books and communicate by writing.”

The classification followed in modern dictionaries is threefold: (1) according to the meaning of the words; (2) phonetic, according to the sound and the ‘tones’ and (3) graphic according to the external from of the symbols. On the whole there are 214 categories of characters in Chinese writing, distinguished by certain radicals or keys, according to the number of strokes they contain. The direction of writing is vertical, from above downwards, the columns arranged from right to left.

By its very nature Chinese writing was very complicated and cumbrous to influence people of other cultures. Yet the Annamites and some non-Chinese people of China adopted it not to speak of the Japanese.” The Japanese who learnt the art of writing from the Chinese were responsible for a thorough simplification of the script occasioned by the structure of their language.” Japanese is a polysyllabic language while Chinese is monosyllabic. “The Chinese characters which are verbal phonograms could only be used for the polysyllabic Japanese words by being treated as syllabic signs. A number of characters sufficient to constitute a syllabary having been selected from the numerous Chinese verbal phonograms, it was found that the whole apparatus of determinatives (or keys, radicals or

137. Diringer, op. cit., p. 110, “Tradition assigns the invention of the development of Chinese ‘phonetics’ or spelling to Buddhist missionaries from India translating their sacred books into Chinese, who were anxious to introduce some system in order to read and explain their holy scriptures correctly. However, the most important system of Chinese spelling is the syllabic method  bdsm ch’ieh which gives the sound of a character by writing two other characters, the first to represent the initial and the palatalization, the second to represent the final—including the vowel—the labialization and the tone.” (Ibid.)

138. Chinese writing has, however, influenced externally many other scripts, particularly the Mongolian scripts and the Korean alphabet, (Ibid., p. 117.)

139. Haddon, Evolution in Art, p. 218.
primitives as they are termed in describing Chinese writing) might be rejected, being no longer indispensable to the reader. By these two changes an almost incredible simplification of the Chinese writing was effected. But though syllabism is a great advance on a system of verbal phonograms, yet it is necessarily somewhat cumbersome owing to the considerable number of characters which are required."

We have seen how the Egyptians too stopped short of the final development of true alphabetic writing. This only confirms that there must be a large gap between the penultimate and the ultimate stages. The Semites who lived in the delta of lower Egypt during the five or six centuries of the Hyskos dynasty, seized on the alphabetic symbols of the cursive Hieratic developed by the Egyptian scripts for secular writings. "Their language and mode of thought being different from that of the Egyptian scribe, and having no sacred traditions to hamper them, they were able to break away from the trammels of antiquity. They were wise enough to drop the useless number of the phonogram and ideogram and so they dissected out, as it were, the alphabet from the cursive hieratic." This reform of the script was a vital necessity for them as it gave them a ready and simple method for recording business transactions. The spread of the alphabet to other lands and peoples is mainly due to the early oversea traders, the Phoenicians, who distributed it, so to say, along with their wares. The Greeks who also had learnt the alphabet from the Phoenicians, however, perfected it to a degree not contemplated by others. This improvement in notation "enabled them to register thoughts more ennobling than the records of commerce. It is scarcely conceivable that Greece could have risen to her intellectual pre-eminence if she had been shackled with phonetic writing. Evolution in notation is necessary for the evolution of mental processes."  

140. The development of Japanese writing stopped with the invention of the syllabaries. "The fact that during more than a thousand years it should never have occurred to a people so ingenious as the Japanese to develop their syllabary into an alphabet may suffice to show that the discovery of the alphabetic principle of writing is not such an easy or obvious matter as might be supposed." (Isaac Taylor, quoted in Haddon, op cit.)

141. Haddon, op. cit., p.220.

142. Ibid.
The short survey of the history of writing in the foregoing pages does not include many of the deeper aspects of the problems; neither is it extensive in its range, as many countries have been omitted, mainly for considerations of space. And for its length perhaps it is too cramped with somewhat technical details, the contours of which are none too clear; and thus, it may be that facts often get telescoped into speculations. Yet in one sense, this arrangement is inevitable—but not undesirable for that—for where we do not have incontrovertible evidence we are tempted to build probable hypotheses and the line between hypothesis and pure speculation is often quite thin. The study of writing is still not such a well-developed subject as some of the other branches of history. There is plenty of research to be done, many intricate questions to be answered and for all we know, as we answer them more questions will crop up. And thus we go on goaded by the urge for that elusive ideal of perfection. Already we have many a mighty achievement to our credit, but more is to be learnt. We have gathered a fair percentage of good wheat, but the harvest is not yet over.
APPENDIX

ROCK PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS IN INDIA

The question whether there was any ideographic script that preceded the evolution of true writing in India as is found in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, has not found a good answer. This is not due to the paucity of material evidence on the subject but due to the indeterminable nature of most of the material available with regard to their chronology and place in the evolution of writing in India.

It is difficult to ascertain the pre-historic nature of the rock paintings and engravings in India. Flake tools and microlithic implements have been collected from many sites in North India where rock paintings have also been noticed. In the Deccan rock paintings and engravings have been found near sites which have yielded neolithic implements and pottery. Thus it may be seen that the central table land of India, excluding the Indus and Gangetic valleys, and the Deccan plateau form the cradle of Indian rock paintings and engravings. Most of these, however, are not datable with any amount of certainty, but can be generally ascribed to the first or second quarter of the first millennium B.C. at the earliest. To the early series of Rock paintings belong those found in the Mahadeo Hills in Madhya Pradesh, and classified by D. H. Gordon as belonging to the Early First Series. These are mainly line sketches of human figurines and animals, the ‘ape-man’ and carpet designs with tasselled hem. These drawings are followed by three more Series, the last of which is dated as late as the tenth century A.D. Gordon in view of the ‘unbroken’ ‘succession’ linking one series to the next, suggests therefore that “the earliest of these paintings cannot be taken back earlier than c. 700 B.C.”

On the analogy of the harpoons and spear-heads from the Gangetic Valley copper hoards, the painted spear-heads from Likhunia (Mirzapur), are ascribed to the eighth century B.C., as their earliest date. There are other paintings from Mirzapur

which depict hunting scenes, animals and birds. These have parallels from Hoshangabad and Singanpur.  

In the last decade, archaeological explorations in the districts of Madhya Pradesh have thrown valuable light on the antiquity of the rock-paintings in India. A large number of microlithic implements have been collected from the rock-shelter at Adamgarh Quarry. M. G. Dikshit discovered them in the rock-shelters of Kabra Pahar and at Mori and Awra in the Mandasor district. In the rock shelter at Modi, M. V. Trivedi, assisted by V. S. Wakankar, excavated a trench which yielded eight layers, a coloured stone and haematite-coloured granules.

Early Brahmi inscriptions have been reported from some caves in Madhya Pradesh. In one of the rock shelters bearing rock paintings near Kharwai in the Raisen district, an Ashokan Brahmi inscription consisting of three letters has been noticed. In one of the rock shelters at Bhinyapura, twenty miles south of Bhopal, V. S. Wakankar reports an early Brahmi inscription in characters of the second century B.C.

In the Deccan though the rock paintings and engravings are scattered in groups, a good number of them are found in the Raichur district "at Koppal, Piklihal, Maski, Billarayan Gudda and in the Benkal forest." The early paintings are coloured in a dark red ochre. These paintings generally represent animals, armed men, horse-riders and hunting or chasing scenes.

Pecked rock engravings are found on the Gombigudda hill in the Belgaum district, at Chiltaldrug in Mysore and Kuppagallu near Bellary. The last of these is adjacent to the excavated site of Sanganakallu. The engravings at Kuppagallu shows animal

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5. Ibid., 55-56, p. 69.
7. Ibid., 59-59, p. 28.
motifs pecked in outline. There are some later pecked engravings also showing human sexual motifs.

While dealing with the chronology of the Prehistoric paintings and engravings and their association with the Prehistoric Cultures in India, it must be borne in mind that there is no correlation between the periods such as the Chalcolithic and Neolithic between Western Asia and Europe on the one hand and India on the other. Therefore there is a vast range of difference between the periods, techniques and themes of the cave paintings in India and those in other countries. It is important to note here that the rock paintings and engravings, respectively attributed to the Chalcolithic and Neolithic folk in India are only the casual handiwork of the people who did not have any developed script for their language. Hence these paintings and engravings do not contribute much for a study of the origin and evolution of writing in India. On the other hand pictographs or picture-writing, in the form of grafitti marks, found on the pottery of the Chalcolithic and Megalithic Cultures of India, open a new field for intensive study and research.¹⁰

¹⁰ The study in this field started long ago by M. Yazdani has been taken up again by scholars like B.B. Lal and a few others. (See B.B. Bali's article, 'From the Megalithic to the Harappa: tracing back the grafitti on the pottery' in Ancient India, Number 16 (1960), pp. 1-24 and plates 1-xxxiv)
CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF WRITING IN INDIA

More than seventy years ago R. N. Cust, the then Honorary Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, published an article ‘on the origin of the Indian Alphabet’ in the Journal of the Society. But he was not the first to attempt to solve the mystery of the origin of the Indian alphabet. Earlier still many others had paid their best attention to the problem, i.e., even from the beginning of the last century. But the attempt of Cust reviewing the position as it then stood and formulating his own conclusions came in just when in India too regular and systematic survey of the archaeological and epigraphical material available had been begun. Since then many scholars have studied the subject from various angles and produced a vast literature. Still, there has been no unanimous opinion on the origin of scripts in India. Even on the Brāhmī script, the earliest known in India, there exists to-day much difference of opinion among scholars.

Though Sir William Jones hazarded his theory on the origin of the Indian alphabet as early as 1806 and was followed in the attempt by some others, yet it cannot be said that the question received any importance or much attention till the Brāhmī inscriptions of Aśoka were deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837. The study of his decipherment of the script is itself very interesting and reads very much like fiction.

During this long period of over a century and a half many theories, some of them very fantastic, have been suggested. A few of them still hold the field, while the majority of them have received no support at all.

Theories concerning the origin of the Brāhmī script, varied as they are, may be conveniently divided into two main groups: one ascribing a foreign origin to the Brāhmī script i.e., that it was borrowed from some foreign source and the other claiming an indigenous origin for it, i.e., the script was invented and developed in India itself.

2. J. A. S. B. III, pp. 7 and 485. (Plate 5.)
Even among the protagonists of the theory of a foreign origin for the script there are wide divergences of opinion as to the country from which and the channel through which India borrowed the script. These different theories about its foreign origin may be reviewed here.

**Greek Origin:**

James Prinsep was the first scholar who successfully unravelled the mysteries of the Brāhmī script. He was inclined to ascribe the alphabet of the Aśokan inscriptions to the Greek source. In this view he was followed by Otfrid Mueller and some time after even by Émile Senart. The same view also appears to have been shared by Raoul de Rochette, Goblet d’Alviella and others. Prinsep and Mueller seem to have based their view on the guess hazarded by Wilson that “Aśoka’s Buddhists derived their letters from Greek or Phoenician models,” taking the former of the alternatives suggested as their source. It may be true that there are resemblances between the Greek and the earliest Brāhmī characters. But the theory of Greek origin is beset with formidable difficulties relating to both chronology and philology. These have never been successfully answered. It is fairly certain that the Brāhmī script was used in India even before the days of Aśoka. Taking into consideration the various forms (recensions or varieties) of the Brāhmī script noticed in the inscriptions of Aśoka, it will not be incorrect to conclude that it should have been in vogue in the country for a long time to attain such variations by natural evolution. The Indians came into direct contact with the Greeks only long after their acquaintance with other peoples using alphabetic writing. If it was a question of borrowing they would have borrowed from other alphabetic systems and not the Greek which was itself a borrowed one. Diringer also says that “the main improvement of the Greek alphabet on the Semitic was the introduction of vowels, while the chief weakness of the Indian scripts is [their unsatisfactory solution of vocalization].”

would not have happened if it had been the result of any borrowing. This apart, as regards the resemblance between the Greek and Brāhmi characters, it actually seems to be the other way. There is no doubt that the Greek alphabet was deeply indebted to the Phoenician characters. This does not necessarily suggest a Phoenician origin for the Brāhmi script for it is even suggested by some scholars that the Phoenicians themselves were of Indian origin (the Vedic Pāṇi) who very probably carried with them the art of writing and spread it in Western Asia. The Phoenician alphabet itself has been put forward as the parent of the Brāhmi script and this will be considered separately below.

Hellenistic influence on the invention of the Brāhmi script has been suggested by Joseph Halevy and others. Halevy maintained that the Brāhmi was derived from a mixture of Aramaic, Kharoṣṭhī and Greek letters in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C. But we know that the Brāhmi had been in existence even before that period. In the words of Dr. Buhler "this theory may be at once eliminated as it does not agree with the literary and palaeographic evidences." Consequently the theory of the Greek origin of the Brāhmi script had long been given up.

Chinese Origin:

Terrein de la Couperie thought that the original source of the Brāhmi was to be sought in the Chinese picture-writing. But this suggestion cannot be accepted. As said earlier the Chinese writing is only in the ideographic form. It has never passed that transitional stage, and thus has never reached even the syllabic stage. But the Brāhmi is a fully developed script. Thus this fanciful theory need not be considered seriously. In fact nobody seems to have bestowed much thought to it. The theory was discarded long ago.

Assyrian (Cuneiform) Origin:

Scholars like Deecke and Canon Issac Taylor have argued that the origin of the Brāhmi script should be sought in the Assyrian Cuneiform through the South Semitic (which was also the parent

9. *Indian Palaeography*, *(Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIII, App., p. 9.)
of the Sabaen or Himyaritic script) as an intermediate step. Rhys Davids also derived the Brahmi from the same source. He suggested that the only hypothesis harmonising these discoveries is that the Indian letters were derived from the alphabet of neither the Northern nor the Southern Semites, but from the source to which those, in their turn, owed their origin i.e., the pre-Semitic form of writing used in the Euphrates Valley. But "this great authority on Buddhist literature is practically alone in his theory, which is unsubstantiated by any important evidence in its favour". He has not shown what, the "pre-Semitic form of writing used in the Euphrates valley is, whether there is any convincingly sufficient resemblance between it and the Brahmi jīpī, and at what period approximately it was transplanted into India." South Semitic itself has been considered by some scholars as the original source of the Brahmi. It will be considered below in its proper place. But to connect the Brahmi with the Assyrian Cuneiform is too fanciful to be seriously considered.

**Semitic Origin:**

Most of the scholars advocating a foreign origin for the Brahmi script hold the Semitic characters as its parent. But they are not agreed among themselves as to what branch of the Semitics produced or influenced the Brahmi. There are at least three sources cited for its origin: (a) Phoenician, (b) South Semitic through the Sabaen of Yemen and (c) North Semitic through the Aramaean of Babylon.

**Phoenician Origin:**

Weber postulated the theory that the earliest Phoenician alphabet was the source from which the Brahmi script was derived and in this he was supported by scholars like Benfey, Jenson and others. They tried to prove "that about one-third of the Phoenician letters were identical with the earliest forms of the

corresponding Brāhmī signs; that another third were somewhat similar and the remaining third can be more or less harmonised."

The earlier scholars objected to this theory mainly on the ground that practically all intercourse between Phoenicia and Indiac eased about 800 B.C. i.e., more than five centuries before the date of the inscriptions of Aśoka. But it is very difficult to maintain this view any longer. This question is closely linked up with the origins of the Phoenicians as a people. The scholars of Tyre always thought, and it was accepted by the Greek historians also, that the Phoenicians reached the east coast of the Mediterranean from the east by sea.14 Again the Phoenician script itself is considered as a derivative of the Canaanite (North) branch of the Semitic. It also said: "It seems probable that the Phoenicians had no influence whatever on the origin of the scripts of countries lying to the east of them".15

South Semitic Origin:

According to Professor Deecke, Canon Isaac Taylor and in recent years Professor Sethe, the Brāhmī script descended from the South Semitic alphabet. Deecke thought that it was derived from the Assyrian Cuneiform characters through an ancient south Semitic alphabet which was also the parent of the Sabaeans or Himyaritic script.16 Taylor derived it from a lost South Semitic alphabet, the predecessor of the Sabaeans.17 He takes the ancient alphabet of Safa and Sabaea as his sources and gives a table in which the derivations are given.18 Among the most remarkable of his derivations may be mentioned those of the letter va from the Semitic y sound, of gha from the Semitic kha, of j from y and of c from the deep glottal gab. Regarding these derivations Bühler comments as follows: "As the Hindus are very particular, even pedantic in matters connected with phonetics, and as the framers of the Brāhmī liṅg have been careful with regard to the formation of many derivative

14. Herodotos, II, 44.
15. Diringer, op. cit., p. 335.
17. The Alphabet, Vol. II, pp. 314 ff; This has been restated with some modifications by F. Muller.
signs, duly deriving $dha$ from $da$, $pha$ from $pa$, $bha$ from $ba$ and so forth, it seems incredible that they should have no regard for phonetic affinities in utilising the signs they borrowed." 19

Quite apart from the phonetic problems the very real difficulty lies in pointing out how exactly the South Semitic script could have been the parent of Brāhmi. Taylor says: "In comparing the Indian and Sabæan forms it must be borne in mind that no south Semitic inscriptions have yet been discovered of a date sufficiently remote to supply the absolute prototype of the Aśoka letters. Of the inscriptions which accident has preserved, none probably is older than the middle of the second century B.C., a period later by about a century than the earliest Indian Inscriptions," (Italics ours) and adds that "it must therefore be remembered that it is only possible to compare sister alphabets from a common but unknown source." 20

Bühler, who subjected the above theory to strong criticism, remarks: "Neither the sabæan alphabet, nor its perhaps a little more archaic variety, the Libyanean or Thamnudaean will serve the purpose, in spite of a general resemblance in the ductus and of a special resemblance in two or three letters. The derivations proposed by Deecke and Taylor do not fulfil the absolutely necessary conditions, and it will probably not be possible to obtain satisfactory results, even if all the impossible equations are given up, and the oldest Indian signs in every case are chosen for comparison. It would be necessary to assume that several Sabæan letters such as Alaph, Gimel, Zain, Teth, Phe, Qoph and Resh, which show strong modifications of the North-Semitic forms, had been again made similar to their prototypes on being converted by the Hindus into $a$, $ga$, $ja$, $tha$, $pa$, $kha$ and $ra$. In other cases it would be impossible to show any connection between the Sabæan and the Indian signs." 21

North Semitic Origin:

This theory deriving the Brāhmi script from the North Semitic alphabet was originally suggested in 1808 by Jones in

1811 by Von Seetzen, in 1821 by Kopp, in 1834 by Lepsius and
was elaborated in 1856 by Weber and by the end of the last
century by Bühler. They expressed the view that the Indian
alphabet is in no respect an independent invention of the people
of India, who, however, elaborated to a marvellous extent (Italics
ours) a loan which they had received from others and said that
the idea of representative vowel and consonant sounds by symbols
of a pure alphabetic character was derived from Western Asia
beyond any reasonable doubt. But they were not able to fix up
the exact branch which could be considered as the parent for
Brāhmī. It was Bühler, however, that subjected all their theories
to severe criticism and finally advocated the north Semitic origin.
He says: "These difficulties disappear with the derivation of the
Brāhmī from the oldest North Semitic alphabet which shows the
same type from Phoenicia to Mesopotamia. The few inadmissible
equations which Weber's earlier attempt contains may be easily
removed with the help of recently discovered forms." Since
then, this theory has found acceptance with many scholars and the
other theories appear to have been almost discarded and not
seriously considered. For instance, Diringer says: "All historical
and cultural evidence is best co-ordinated by the theory which
considers the early Aramaic alphabet as the prototype of
the Brāhmī script. The acknowledged resemblance of the Brāhmī
signs to the Phoenician letters also applies to the early Aramaic
letters, while in my opinion there can be no doubt that of
all the Semitics, the Aramaean traders were the first who came
in direct communication with the Indo-Aryan merchants." But
this theory of North Semitic origin of the Brāhmī script
has not been accepted by some scholars, both Indian and foreign.
The main arguments in favour of the Semitic origin of the Brāhmī
script are:

1. The absence of the specimens of writing before the fifth
century B.C. in India.
2. The resemblance between the Semitic and the Brāhmī
characters and

22a. See also A. H. Dani, Indian Palaeography, pp. 23-8.

P—7
3. The supposed original direction of the Brāhmī from right to left.

The argument has been slightly amended as follows as a result of the excavations at a number of Harappan sites which have disclosed the earliest highly developed culture in India namely the 'Indus Valley Culture.' But it is felt that "the early Indian writing was pictographic; no alphabetic writing can be derived from pictographs; the earliest known alphabets are Semitic; hence, the Brāhmī (semi-alphabetic) could be derived only from the Semitic sources." 25

The resemblance between the Semitic and the Brāhmī characters is the principal reason for attributing a Semitic origin to the Brāhmī.

Before proceeding further it is necessary to know something about the North Semitic alphabet. It consists of twenty-two letters or symbols, which correspond roughly to the first twenty-two letters of its descendant, the Greek alphabet. Their names as preserved in Hebrew are 'aleph, beth, gimel, daleth, he, waw, zayin, kheh, teth, yod, kaph, lamed, mem, nun, samekh, ayin, pe, sade, qoph, reeh, shin, taw.' 26 Most of these names end with a consonant, though some end with a vowel. It is said that these twenty-two letters represent only eighteen sounds. It is also said that the early distinction between some letters in the North Semitic alphabet (for example between samekh and shin) was lost at a later stage. Some scholars attribute this fact to the use in later times of Aramaic in which for example samekh displaced shin. 27 It has several characters for one sound. It does not make any distinction between the long and short vowels. Even after the introduction of the vowels on account of the influence of the Greeks the consonants and the vowels of the Semitic alphabet cannot coalesce; rather the vowels are written after the consonants. Phonetically the Semitic alphabets are a jumble rather than a system. For instance, just after a (alef), which is guttural, we have b (beth) which is labial. The Semitic alphabet, it must not be forgotten,

27. Ibid., p. 219.
is one of mere consonants, and originally it did not contain vowels. The Semitics could, if necessary, dispense with vowel signs. The Hebrew even now writes ה-י-ב to indicate any word having a meaning connected with ‘writing,’ although the word would never be read ק-י-ב, but ק-י-ב (he wrote), ק-י-ב (he is writing), ק-י-ב (I shall write), and so forth, according to the sense of the sentence; whereas in an Indo-Aryan tongue, a word written with mere consonants would have many meanings or no meaning at all (e.g., in English c-s could mean ‘cat,’ ‘cut,’ ‘cot,’ ‘city,’ ‘cute,’ ‘act,’ ‘acute’ or no meaning at all). 28

In the table giving the derivation of the Brahmī script, Bühler maintains that twenty-two letters of the Brahmī alphabet were derived from the North Semitic alphabet, some of them from early Phoenician, a few from Mesopotamia’s stone inscription and five from the ‘script on the weights from Assyria.’ The remaining letters of the Brahmī were also derived from the borrowed signs by introducing certain devices.

Key to the Table of Bühler deriving the Brahmī script from the North Semitic Alphabet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Aleph</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bet (Beth)</td>
<td>ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Gimel</td>
<td>ga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Daleth</td>
<td>da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>He</td>
<td>ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Waw</td>
<td>va</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Zayin</td>
<td>ja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kheth</td>
<td>gha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teth</td>
<td>tha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Yod</td>
<td>ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Kaph</td>
<td>ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lamed</td>
<td>la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Mem</td>
<td>ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Nun</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Samekh</td>
<td>sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>‘Ayin</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Pe</td>
<td>pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>‘Shade</td>
<td>ca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Qoph</td>
<td>kha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Resh</td>
<td>re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Shin</td>
<td>sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Taw</td>
<td>ta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the above table will show that:

1. No less than ten letters, *i.e.*, nearly half the total had to be given ‘intermediate’ forms as Bühler calls them; in other words they are merely hypothetical.

2. Only one Brāhmi letter *ga* may be identical with its supposed proto-type: and

3. Of the rest only five, *viz.*, *a*, *t*, *th*, *l* and *s* may be reasonably regarded as probable derivatives and even of these the *la* has come through an intermediate form.

In addition to the above the following points also should be noted:

"In deriving one script from the other, even if similarities could be proved between the shapes of these two scripts evidence would still be lacking that one descended from the other, unless the likeness of the signs belonging to the two systems corresponds with the similarity or identity of their phonetic values. In this connection it may be noted that the Minoan script as well as the Cypriote syllabary contained many signs resembling the early Greek letters, but one was not derived from the other."  

The derivation given by Bühler in the above Table does not satisfy this general principle in many cases. His methods of derivation are difficult of acceptance; and if they are accepted, the Brāhmi characters can be derived not only from the Phoenician and the Aramaic but also from any known character of the world.

It will be seen that the following signs appearing in both the Semitic and the Brahmi alphabets indicate different values unconnected with each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>Semitic Phonetic value</th>
<th>Brahmi Phonetic value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zayin</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>Tan</td>
<td>ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ</td>
<td>Daleth</td>
<td>e (vowel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>‘Ayin</td>
<td>tha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lamed</td>
<td>pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>φ</td>
<td>Qoph</td>
<td>eha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ə</td>
<td>Kaph</td>
<td>a (vowel)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But curiously enough Bühler ignores this similarity. He derives the symbols for these Brāhmī letters from some other Semitic originals; and similarly the above Semitic alphabets have been treated as the parents of some Brāhmī letters, all of them supposedly based on the similarity in the written form.

It is generally considered that the Kharoṣṭhī script also was derived from the same North Semitic alphabet. But they present quite a different picture. For a better understanding of the problem, a perusal of the table given by Bühler showing the derivation of the Kharoṣṭhī from the North Semitic script will be necessary.

**Key to the Table of Bühler deriving the Kharoṣṭhī script from the North Semitic alphabet.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Original North Semitic</th>
<th>Sign borrowed for Kharoṣṭhī</th>
<th>Derivative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Aleph</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>i, u, e, o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Be (Beth)</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>bha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Gimel</td>
<td>ga</td>
<td>gha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Daleth</td>
<td>ḍha</td>
<td>dha, ḍa, ḍha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>He</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Waw</td>
<td>va</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Zayin</td>
<td>ja</td>
<td>jha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kheth</td>
<td>s’a</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teth</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Yod</td>
<td>ya</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Kaph</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lamed(^9)</td>
<td>la</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Mem(^9)</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ṇa, ṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Nun</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Samekh</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>‘Ayin</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Pe</td>
<td>pa</td>
<td>pha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Ṣade</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>cha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Qoph</td>
<td>kha</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Resh</td>
<td>ra</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Shin(^9)</td>
<td>ṣa</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Taw</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>tha, ṭa, ṭha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^9\) The letters Lamed and Shin are not included in this table.
The table shows that (i) out of the twenty letters borrowed, no less than eight are identical with the Semitic forms, viz, ca, da, ma, pa, ha, na, va and sa.

(ii) nine others, viz., ka, kha, ga, ja, ma, ya, la, sa, and ha may be reasonably regarded as derived from the Semitic prototypes and

(iii) there are no assumed 'intermediate' forms.

A comparison of these two tables will show that the Brāhmī script derives from twenty-two letters of the North Semitic alphabet while Kharoṣṭhī only from twenty, the two letters Teth and 'Ayin having been excluded.

The derivation of the cerebrals and dentals in these two systems also deserve special notice. The Brāhmī and the Kharoṣṭhī alphabets, for both of which the same parentage is attributed by scholars, differ very much from each other. The marked characteristics of the Kharoṣṭhī script are as follows:

1. The letters are generally thin and long, more or less slanting to the right with appendages attached to their upper parts.

2. They are very irregular in shape and size and many forms are confusingly similar.

3. The script is clearly cursive.

4. There are very few looped forms.

5. The script always runs from right to left.

On the contrary the following are the chief characteristics of the Brāhmī script as given by Bühler himself:

1. The letters stand upright.

2. They are made of regular lines and loops.

3. The letters hang down unlike in Kharoṣṭhī which are top-heavy.

4. Most of the vowel signs are added at the top in the shape of horizontal lines.

29. The original Semitic has been turned upside down.
30. The derivative represents the anusvāra.
31. The original Semitic has been turned upside down.
To these characteristics may be added the following:

5. The script is written from left to right "a.

6. And finally, the script is distinctly monumental and donative.

It may be seen, thus, that "it does not appear very probable that two such fundamentally different alphabets could have been derived from the same source, especially when we bear in mind that they were both needed for the same purpose and practically for the same language too. To overcome this difficulty it has been suggested that while the Kharoṣṭhi came overland through Gandhara, the Brāhmi came by sea through Babylon via the Persian Gulf." A further suggestion is that one was a clerk's alphabet also used by the merchants while the other was elaborated by the learned pandits.

Comparative table of the Derivatives of the Brāhmi and Kharoṣṭhi alphabets as given by Bühler.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Derivation for Kharoṣṭhi</th>
<th>Derivation for Brāhmi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;i&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;i&quot;</td>
<td>Aleph (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;u&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;u&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Ain (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;α&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;α&quot;</td>
<td>Waw (o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;ε&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;ε&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Ayin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;αι&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;αι&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Ayin (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;γ&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Γ&quot;</td>
<td>Kheth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;θ&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;θ&quot;</td>
<td>Teth (th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;δ&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;δ&quot;</td>
<td>Deleth (dh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;θ&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;θ&quot;</td>
<td>Teth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;δ&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;δ&quot;</td>
<td>Daleth (dh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;ο&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;ο&quot;</td>
<td>Shin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;σ&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;σ&quot;</td>
<td>Samekh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31a The alleged specimens of Brāhmi writing indicating a right to left direction, the boustrophedon style, are discussed later on.
Scholars postulating the North Semitic source to both the Kharoṣṭhi and the Brāhmi are unable to derive the same letter in both from the same original source. In Kharoṣṭhi all the vowels were derived from the letter aleph, the first in the Semitic alphabet. But in the Brāhmi only the first two i.e., a both short and long, were derived from the letter aleph; the vowel e from the deep glottal Semitic letter 'ayin and the vowels i, i and a were in turn derived from this letter e, while the vowels i, u and o were derived from the Semitic letter waw. Similarly the consonant gha of the Kharoṣṭhi was derived from the Semitic letter gimel, while that of the Brāhmi has been derived from the Semitic khet. Further phonetically the originals and the derivations differ very much. In Sanskrit the vowel e is the derivative (guna) of the vowel i; and while it is so, to say that the letter of the vowel i was derived from that of e would certainly be not acceptable. To say that the accurate and even "pedantic" phoneticians of India evolved the Brāhmi from the Semitic in complete disregard of the phonetics clearly makes a very large demand on our credulity.

In the Kharoṣṭhi the letter tā was derived from the North Semitic taw and the letters thā, ṭa and thā were in their turn, from the original derivative tā. Similarly the letter dā was derived from the North Semitic daleth and the dha, ḍa and ḍha were in their turn from the derivative dā. Only the dental unaspirated sounds tā and dā were represented in the North Semitic alphabet. Their aspirated form and the corresponding aspirated and unaspirated forms of the cerebrals as well were derived from the respective dentals. This definitely shows that there was some principle in the derivation.

In the Brāhmi also, the letter tā was derived from the Semitic taw; it had no derivative in its turn. The aspirated form of thā was derived from the Semitic teth and the corresponding aspirated and unaspirated forms of the cerebral tā and thā were in their turn obtained from the derivative thā. All the four letters of the Kharoṣṭhi derived from the Semitic daleth were derived in the Brāhmi also from the same letter. But the order was different. The aspirated form dha was the main derivative and the others, da, ḍa and ḍha were obtained from the main form dha. Phonetically it is anomalous and incongruous to derive the unaspirated
from the aspirated. The usual process is the reverse, viz.: the aspirated is obtained from the unaspirated; and a perusal of the Brāhmi script will also bear out the fact. In the original Semitic both Teth and Deleth are unaspirates.

Further, from a comparison of the Brāhmi forms of the cerebrals and dentals, it would appear that the cerebrals were the main forms and that the dentals are derived from them. This will be very clear in the cases of ṭha and tha, where the difference is the addition of a dot to the former to distinguish it from the latter. This would indicate that the Semitic teth is a later form derived from the Brāhmi. The same will also apply to the Semitic form 'Ayin, which has the same form as the Brāhmi e. Very likely these two were introduced in the Semitic through the influence of the Brāhmi. We shall then have to conclude that the Brāhmi far from deriving from the Semitic actually influenced the Semitic at least to a small extent.

Bühler recognises the following peculiarities of the Indian alphabet in his attempt to derive the Brāhmi from the North Semitic alphabet and the principles according to which the conversion took place:

1. The letters are set up as straight as possible; and with occasional exceptions in the signs of ṭa, ṭha, and ba they are made equal in height.

2. The majority consists of vertical lines with appendages mostly to the foot, and occasionally both at the foot and at the top, or rarely in the middle, but there is no instance in which there has been an appendage to the top alone.

3. At the top of the letters appear mostly the ends of verticals, less frequently short horizontal strokes, still more rarely curves on the tops of angles opening downwards, and quite exceptionally in ma and in one form of ṇha two lines rising upwards. In no case does the top show several angles placed side by side, with a vertical or slanting line hanging down, or a triangle or a circle with a pendent line."
And he deduced the principles of the derivation of the Brāhmī from the North Semitic alphabet on the basis of the following tendencies of the Indian alphabet:

1. A certain pedantic formalism.
2. A desire to frame signs suited for the formation of regular lines; and
3. An aversion to top heavy characters.

He thinks that "the last peculiarity is probably due in part to the circumstance that since early times the Indians made their letters hang down from an imaginary or really drawn upper line and in part to the introduction of vowel-signs most of which are attached horizontally to the tops of the consonants. Signs with the ends of verticals at the top were, of course, best suited for such a script. Owing to these inclinations and aversions of the Hindus, the heavy tops of many Semitic letters had to be got rid of by turning the signs topsy-turvy or laying them on their sides, by opening the angles, and so forth. Finally, the change in the direction of writing necessitated a further change, inasmuch as the signs had to be turned from the right to the left as in Greek." 32

This line of argument presupposes the following factors: (1) the Indians were already using some sort of writing; (2) they were familiar with the Semitic script; (3) their method or system of writing was defective in many ways; (4) at the same time they found the Semitic alphabet satisfactory, though not fully representing all the required sounds of their (sic. the Indian) language and (5) they adopted the Semitic alphabet making the necessary changes and creating new symbols for the non-Semitic, but Indo-Aryan sounds. For any borrowing, whether it be language, word, or any aspect of culture or anything else by one country or nation from any other it is necessary that (1) the borrowing nation or people are quite familiar with the borrowed material; and (2) they have realised their utility, superiority and also the necessity of such material for being borrowed. Again when any foreign material is borrowed it is adopted wholesale in the first instance and then modified gradually to suit the local require-

32. Bühler, op. cit., pp. 10.11.
ments, taste or inclinations. They would not happen in a single day, but would take a long time. Thus if the Brāhmī script had been derived from the Semitic alphabet after making the necessary changes, the Semitic script also must have been in use in this country in its original form. Only after several generations of constant use the form best suited to express a particular sound evolves finally to hold the field. Thus one would naturally expect to find specimens of such writings in this country for the theory of the Semitic origin of the Brāhmī script to be true. But nothing of the kind has been found so far.

One other argument of the protagonists of the theory of the Semitic origin is that originally the direction of the Brāhmī script was from right to left. This was based on very meagre and doubtful data. At the time when Bühler wrote in his 'Indian Studies' and finally published in his Indian Palaeography the specimens of Brāhmī written from right to left were similar to the Brāhmī letters in the legend on the coin discovered at Erān in the Jubbulpur District considered as pre-Mauryan and assigned to the fourth century B.C. He has also found a few traces in the edicts of Aśoka of the writing from right to left in the forms of some letters, in the o of Jaugada and Dhauli versions and in the rare dha of Jaugada and Delhi-Sivalik versions. Again he says that in the Drāviḍī type of the Brāhmī found on the relic caskets of Bhaṭtiprolu, the signs for the three letters, d, dh and ḍh are in the position of the writing running from right to left. According to him even the Erān coin "probably dates from the time when the Brāhmī was written both from the right to the left and from the left to the right" and that "the time when the Brāhmī was written bowstrophedon probably lies somewhat before the Maurya period, since the Aśoka edicts show only a few traces of the writing from right to left." Since then the version of the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka at Yeṛṛagudi in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh has been discovered. This record contains twenty three lines of writing of which eight, namely lines 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 23 are from right to left.

Diringer, a strong supporter of the theory of Bühler, says that "there is thus sufficient evidence of the existence of an earlier Brāhmi script written from right to left, followed—as in the development of the early Greek script—by a transitional system of writing in boustrophedon style." 36

However, Diringer's statement cannot be regarded as satisfactory and conclusive in deciding the question concerning the direction of writing of the original Brāhmi. Many scholars have assumed that the peculiarity or the Erān coin, as suggested by Hultsch was due to a fault in the matrix from which the coin had been cast. 87 Hultsch thinks that it is "a mistake of the engraver of the dye, who like the die sinker in the case of a certain coin of Holkar of the last century may have forgotten that he ought to reverse the legend on the die itself." Fleet has also pointed out that "we have one instance of such remissness in ancient times in a coin of Rapla Raujuvala, the reverse of which presents a monogram formed of the Greek letters E and y facing the wrong direction. 38 Yet another is in the legend on a bronze stamp for making seals, where the engraver omitted to reverse the syllable s. 89 Thus the data relied on by Bühler cannot be a sure indication of the direction of writing. That is why Hultsch and Fleet, two great authorities on Indian epigraphy, especially of South India and the Deccan, did not agree with the conclusions of Bühler.

Similarly the forms of some letters of Asoka's edicts with a right to left direction should also be attributed to the fault of the engravers. These are not stray ones. A few other examples may be cited. In the Brāhmi label inscription of Kila-vajavu, described and discussed later in the book the letters are incised upside down, thus showing that the engraver had great convenience in working from the upper part of the cave than from the front. But one of the letters in the record ta is found in the

38. Gardner, Catalogue of Coins of the Greek and Sceythian kings of Bactria and India, p. 67, No. 5.
proper position when seen from the ground, instead of being upside down as the rest. Again the Brāhma label record at Kunnakkudi, also discussed elsewhere in the book, presents another peculiarity. The individual letters are incised in the reverse position, the engraver working from the upper part of the cave, thus appearing upside down when seen from the ground in front, even though the record runs from left to right when seen from the floor. Thus the record through its reflection in a mirror is seen to run from right to left. But it appears to run from left to right to the person standing on the floor only with the letters reversed and upside down. Among the nearly fifty such Brāhma labels found so far in the Tamil country this is the solitary record of the kind. This can only be taken as due to the fault or vagary or idiosyncrasy of the engraver and not as indicating the method of writing from right to left.

Thus the specimens so far known to us are sporadic and very few in number in comparison with the large number of contemporary inscriptions written from left to right. It is also to be noted that these irregular forms of letters appear only in the records discovered on the boundaries of the Ašokan empire. Even in the manner of writing from left to right, two methods, one proceeding clock-wise and the other counter-clockwise appear to have been adopted according to the genius of the people concerned to suit their convenience. It is well known that the adoption of the later or the counter-clockwise method led to the derivation of the cursive varieties, the Vaṭṭeluttu and the Telugu Kannada scripts. It is thus quite possible that the irregular form of some letters in the Ašoka's edicts in the transposed position was influenced by the second method.

Regarding the Yerāguḍi version of the Minor Rock Edict of Ašoka it is true that more than half of the inscription appears to be written in boustrophedon or alternating lines. But this style has not been followed correctly; lines 7 and 8 and also from 15 to 22 run from left to right without alternation, while lines 13 and 14 similarly run from right to left without such alternation. This only shows that the boustrophedon style was known here.

40. See Journal of the Madras University, vol. xxx, No. 1. pp. 5-7 where the inscription has been edited by the author.
during the time of Asoka. Or it may be that the scribe was merely trying a new experiment. Moreover in the lines running from right to left only the positions of letters are changed and not their forms, which shows that it is a forced and artificial way of writing and that it has no bearing on the origin of the Brahmi script.

Such innovations are also not unknown to Indian epigraphy. The stone inscription referring to Pallava Simhavarman and incised in the Telugu-Kannada script of the 11-12th century A.D. at Amaravati in the Krishna District,41 begins at the bottom and proceeded upwards. From this instance one cannot postulate the theory that writing, at one time, commenced at the bottom and proceeded upwards at least in South India, if not in the whole country. At best these can be taken to be only due to the vagaries or the fancies of the engraver.

Thus the link discovered by Büßler in the two sets of specimens in the chain of arguments which were to prove the derivation of the Brahmi alphabets from the Semitic alphabets which were written from right to left appears to be nonexistent.

The foregoing discussion will show clearly that there are formidable difficulties in accepting the theory of the Semitic origin for the Brahmi script designed and formed according to the phonetics and highly complicated principles of grammar. The advocates of the Semitic theory are not unaware of this. For instance, Diringer says: "We do not assume that the Brahmi is a simple derivative of the Aramaic Alphabet. It was probably mainly the idea of alphabetic writing which was accepted."42 This is only a round about way of pleading for a view that is not sustainable.

**Numerals**

Besides these arguments against the Semitic origin of the Brahmi there are a few other reasons which disprove the theory. Though by themselves they are not weighty enough to explode the theory, when considered along with other arguments set forth

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above, they strengthen the case against the acceptance of any foreign origin for the Brāhmi script.

Generally the numerals and the letters go together, and hence they are considered as the two eyes." The Origin and development of the numeral forms are closely related to the origin and development of letters, and both of them are component parts of the art of writing.

The numeral forms are already found in the inscriptions of Aśoka written both in the Brāhmi and the Kharoṣṭhī scripts. But both of them differ materially. The system of numeral notation found in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions in India consists of fundamental signs; and all numbers are expressed by grouping them.

The fundamental signs of the Kharoṣṭhī numerals are:
(a) one, two and three vertical strokes for 1, 2, and 3;
(b) an inclined cross resembling the mathematical symbol of multiplication for 4;
(c) a sign similar to the Kharoṣṭhī A for 10,
(d) a double curve, looking like a cursive combination of two 10's for 20.
(e) a sign resembling the Brāhmi letter ta or tra for 100 to the right of which stands a vertical stroke, where by the whole becomes equivalent to 'one hundred' (I C). (See Bühler's Tables, Plate I, Col. XIV for illustrations).

The numbers lying between these elements i.e., the intervening numbers are expressed by groups and the additional ones are invariably placed on the left in consonance with the direction of writing running from right to left. Thus number 5 is represented by the symbols 4 and 1; 6 by 4 and 2; 8 by two 4's placed side by side; 50 by two symbols of 20 and one of 10; 60 by three of 20; 70 by three of 20 and one of 10. To express the numerals 11 to 19 and 21 to 29 etc., groups formed of the signs for 10 and 1 to 10 and 9 and 20 and 1 to 20 and 9 and so forth were used. The higher numerals beyond 100 were expressed according to the same principle. Thus 103 is formed by grouping the

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43. **Ennum eḻutum Kannemanañgam**
**En enba eḻai eḻutenañba iviranñgam**
**Kan enba välum uviṉku.**

*(Koṅgaivindan, 7)*

*(Kuoḷ, Puruṣadikāram, Keḻvi, 2)*
symbols for 100 and 3. The sign for 200 consists of the symbols for 100 preceded on the left (i.e., in the direction of writing) by two vertical strokes, thus becoming II C. The number 273, e.g., would be written thus:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
II & C & XX & XX & XX & X & III.
\end{array}
\]

(In the Roman numerals given above the principle of diminishing applicable to the figure to the left of the basic figure (V-5, IV-4) does not apply. Thus I C will mean one hundred and one and not ninety nine).

From the few numeral signs found in the inscriptions of Aśoka at Shahbasgarhi and Mansehra (Bühler's Table, Col. XIII) it is found that the system of numeral notation in Kharosthi differed at least in one important point from the above. The inclined cross or multiplication symbol representing 4 is not found in them. The number 4 is expressed by four parallel vertical strokes and 5 by five such strokes.

The Kharoṣṭhī numerals have for a very long time been taken as of Semitic origin; and the latest view is that they have been borrowed from the Aramaic branch, just like the letters of the script.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the above system of numeral notation is found used in all the Semitic branches, including the prefixing of the signs for 1 and 2 to the 100; but the inclined cross or the ‘multiplication’ symbol used to express number 4 in the later Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions is found only in the Nabataean inscriptions incised after the beginning of the Christian era and is used there only rarely for the expression of higher units. The late occurrence of this sign both in Indian and Semitic inscriptions is significant.

The system of numeral notations in the early Brāhmi both in inscriptions and in coin legends is different. In this system numbers 1 to 3 are expressed by horizontal (not vertical as in Kharoṣṭhī) strokes or cursive combinations of such. Units 4 to 9, tens 10 to 90, 100 and 1000 each by a separate sign; the intermediate and higher numbers by groups or ligature of these fundamental signs.
For figures consisting of tens and units of hundreds and so forth, the symbols for the higher numbers are placed either unconnected to the right or vertically below the higher ones. In the inscriptions and on most coins we find the first method followed. The second is found on a few coins. This method might have been followed on account of the exigencies of space. But this principle is found adopted in the pagination of all manuscripts. To express 200 and 2000, one short stroke is added to the right of the symbol of 100 and 1000 respectively. Similarly 300 and 3000 are formed by the addition of two strokes to the same elements. Ligatures of the symbols of 100 with the signs for 4 to 9, and of 1000 with those of 4 to 7, stood respectively for 400 to 900 and 4000 to 7000 and the smaller figures placed to the right of the larger ones. (Bühler’s Tables, Plate IX).

Regarding the origin of the Brāhmī numerals, scholars originally thought that they were of indigenous origin. But Burnell thought differently. He pointed out that the general agreement of the principles of the Indian system as well as the resemblance of signs from 1 to 9 of the Brāhmī symbols correspond to those of the Demotic branch of the Egyptian writing. Bayley, though accepting that the principles of the Indian system have been derived from the hieroglyphic notation of the Egyptians, tried to show that the majority of the Brāhmī symbols have been borrowed from the Phoenician, Bactrian and Akkadian figures of letters, while for a few a foreign origin is not demonstrable. Bühler thinks that there are great difficulties inter alia by the assumption that the borrowings were from four or five different, partly very ancient and partly more modern sources; but at the same time he says that the comparative table of the Egyptian and Indian signs, and the agreement in their methods in making the hundreds, induced him to adopt with certain modifications the view of Burnell. He thinks it probable that

44. Ind. Ant., Vol. VI, p. 143.
45. Elements of South Indian Palaeography, p. 65, n. 1.
47. Ind. Ant., Vol. XVI, p. 35.
P—9
the Brahmi numeral symbols are derived from the Egyptian Hieratic figures. But he himself remarks that this derivation however still presents difficulties and cannot be called certain. He is also aware that the varying forms in the Asokan edicts show these movements to have had a longer history before the third century B.C.

If the origin of the letters and the numerals of the Brahmi is traced to some foreign source one would naturally expect that both of them are traced to the same foreign source as in the case of Kharoṣṭhī. But the letters have been taken as the derivatives of the North Semitic and the numerals of the Egyptian.

This complicated and incompatible position is evidently the result of a thoroughly wrong approach to the problem from the very beginning. The numeral symbols were taken as the letters, usually a matraka or a ligature, with phonetic values of such symbols and find an explanation for the use of such letters. And in this scholars were rather influenced by the analogy of the Semitic scripts.

In the Semitic scripts, the individual letters have numerical values also in addition to the phonetic ones. Of the twenty-two original letters of the script, the first ten bear the values from 1 to 10 and then the next nine letters by tens from 20 up to 100, and the last three letters by hundreds up to 400. Later on six more letters were added by the Arabs and the letter numerals were up to 1000. These numerical values of the letters, given by the famous Arabic mnemonic commencing with abjad etc., is retained in almost all branches, derived from the Semitic. In Arabic and Persian these letter numerals are used chiefly to record the dates of events.

It is true that this method of indicating the numbers with certain letters assigning them numerical values is found in India also. There are three such systems, and not a single method as in the Semitic, and in each of them the numeral value attached to individual letters is different. But none of these three resembles the Semitic system in any way.

48. See ante, p. 65.
The three Indian system of letter-numerals are the kaṭapayādi, bharakhaḍi or siddhamātrika and the aṅgarakkṣaṇa.

The kaṭapayādi is the system in which each of the consonant letters of the Sanskrit alphabet beginning with ka, ta, pa and ya is assigned the numeral value consecutively from 1 to 9 and 0. This is found used both in inscriptions and in literary works to record the dates of events when such portions of the compositions are in verse form. This is not generally used when the composition is in prose.⁴⁹

The siddhamātrika or bharakhaḍi, also known as the dvadāśakṣari, is the system in which each of the vowels is assigned the number consecutively from 1 to 12. This is found used only in the pagination of manuscripts. There are also some other forms of this system.

The third, aṅgarakkṣaṇa is now thought to designate the system in which certain specified letters are used to denote the numerals. Dr. Bühler has collected such letters from various sources and given them in a tabulated form.⁵⁰ It will be seen there from that the phonetic values of these signs are not constant and vary considerably and also that such phonetic values of the signs often differ from those in the manuscripts. He himself admits that (a) the inscriptions of all the periods, even the Agokan edicts in the case of the number 100, differ from the manuscripts by offering side by side with distinct letters numerous cursive or intentionally modified forms and that in no real aṅgaras; (b) excepting 7, 9, 30, 40, 80 and 90 the phonetic value of the letters varied since the earliest times, and in many cases the variations were very considerable as in the case of 6, 10, 60, 70, 100 and 1000; (c) occasionally, as in the case of 10, 60 and 70, the distinct letters used in the later inscriptions and the manuscripts varied in different ways from cursive signs without a phonetic value.

⁵⁰ Plate IX, i—xxviii, cols. xix, xxvi; and also text in Ind. Ant., Vol. XXXII, Appendix, pp. 73–81.
This system has been in use even in South India; and the
letters used to denote the numerals from 1 to 10 are as follows:
na, nna, nya, gra, jhra, ha, gra, pra, dra, and ma respectively.
To express 11 they write letters ma and na as mana. There
are also separate letters for every ten from twenty to
ninety and for hundred and thousand like the numeral signs.
This system is however not now in use in the Tamil country,
though occasionally used in Kerala in numbering the leaves of
manuscripts. The sheets of the Vēlvikkudi grant are numbered
in this way. The numeral 1 of the former has letter na while that
of the latter has na. When compared with those of the Maṭṭe-
pāḍu plates of Dāmodaravarman of the family known as the
Ānanda gotra (circa 4th century A.D.) it will become evident that
these are the outcome of an independent evolution of the numerals
of the cave inscriptions like many others and that they are not
mere letters.

The scholars who postulated the above proposition did not
explain why only certain letters, of which many were ligatures,
should be chosen for the purpose. If this theory were
correct, then the letter values of the numerals should be uniform.
But this is not so. In North India the number 4 is represented
by the letter nka while in the South it is shown by the letter jhra.
Similarly for 9 the letter o is used in the North while dra is used
in the South. Thus these letters having the numeral values
differ from region to region. But when written in the scripts
of the different regions, the forms for the particular numerals are
very similar to such letters.

Very likely the position seems to have been as follows: Originally the numerals were not represented by certain letters by
assigning numerical values to them. But when numerals had to
be expressed by the authors of literary compositions in the middle
of verses, they resorted to different ways, sometimes the letter
having the form approximately nearest to the numeral. This is
best illustrated by the verse in Tamil attributed to the poet
Kālamēgha, wherein he addresses a person: (etēkal lakṣanamē)
instead of avalakṣaṇa or ugly, as in the Tamil
numerals eight has the shape of the vowel letter a and the
quarter is denoted by the letter va. (It may also be noted in
this connection that in Tantric and astronomical works, the
Sun is represented by the letter tha. In Brahmi this letter had the form of a circle with a dot inside. This is the well-known symbol denoting the Sun all the world over. This is how Malayagiri, the Jaina commentator of the 11th century A.D., denoted the numeral 4 as nika-sabda (the word or symbol having the sound nika—Ind., Ant., vol. VI, p. 47). Most probably this form as akṣara-pālā is a later creation.

Thus it will be evident, that the numerals of the Brahmi script have nothing in common with the numerals of the scripts of Semitic origin and have, had an independent origin and evolution in this country. This is confirmed by the reference in the Vedic literature to very high figures of written arithmetic (further below).\(^{11}\)

The above discussion leads us to the only remaining alternative, viz., that the Brahmi script was of indigenous growth. This theory was first suggested by Lassen and later was strongly upheld by General Cunningham and a few other scholars and epigraphists. But subsequently no serious view was taken of it particularly after Bühl er put forward his theory that the script was of North Semitic origin. After him many scholars held the opinion that Egypt, Sumeria and Babylon which were the homeland of ancient civilizations gave the script to India. But since the discovery of the 'Indus Valley Civilization' in the third decade of the present century the theory of indigenous origin has again received some attention among a section of scholars, the script being connected by a few with the 'Indus Valley Civilization' itself.

Even among the scholars advocating an indigenous origin for the Brahmi script there is no agreement among them about the authors of the invention, some ascribing it to the Dravidians and some others to the Aryans.

Aryan or Vedic Origin:

As mentioned earlier this theory was first suggested by Lassen\(^{11}\) and later on upheld by General Cunningham.\(^{11}\) They held the view that the Aryan priests developed the Brahmi

51. See Supra Chapter III.
alphabet from indigenous Indian hieroglyphics. The arguments they advanced in support of their view were, however, weak. Cunningham for example argued that the Brahmī va (♀) might originally have been a hieroglyph for viṇa (lute) or vahu (arm) or viṇḍu (drop)," and that the letter ta (κ) might have represented tān (to spread) or tāla (the palm tree) or tāraṅga (wave) or tri (three). "Such an elastic method," Taylor very rightly remarks "may establish anything or nothing." Bühler observes "Cunningham’s opinion, which was formerly shared by some prominent scholars presupposes the use of Indian hieroglyphic pictures of which hitherto no trace has been found." It may even be mentioned that these crude attempts, combined with the absence of all positive evidence in the shape of pre-Aśokan inscriptions, were mainly responsible in finding support for the Semitic theory. The discovery of the ‘Indus Valley’ script has however considerably weakened the objections put forward by Bühler. Since then various scholars have tackled the problem from various angles. But each has attempted it from one angle or standpoint only.

R. Shama Sastri propounded a theory according to which the Brahmī characters were derived from various signs and symbols representing devas (deities) and called devanagar (the city of Gods)." The greatest weakness of this theory is that all the evidences produced by him are from the Tantric texts of a very late date, which have no bearing on the problem under discussion.

Dravidian Origin:

Edward Thomas" and other scholars of his way of thinking maintained that the Dravidians were responsible for the invention

54. The forms of the latter two are incorrect dialectical variations, the correct ones being bahu and bindu.


58. Numismatic Chronicle, 1883, No. III.
of the Brāhmi characters which were borrowed by the Aryans. It is assumed that before the Aryans came to India the Dravidians occupied the entire land, and they being culturally more advanced than the Aryans, invented the art of writing. This theory is sometimes objected to on the following lines. One is that the original habitat of the Dravidians was in the South while the Aryans were in Northern India; and the earliest specimens of writing are found in Northern India and not in the South. Moreover it has been argued that the purest representative of the Dravidian languages, Tamil has only the first and fifth letters of a varga (class) whereas the Brāhmi has all the five letters of a varga. "Phonetically the poor Tamil characters obviously seem to have been borrowed from the phonetically commodious Brāhmi characters." 59

The Dravidian theory has again been advocated by T. N. Subrahmanyan. This theory which was hinted at by him more than twenty five years ago in his Tamil publication, Pandatilm Eluttukkal (பந்தடுத்திய எல்லுத்துக்கள், 1938), has been elaborated by him in his ‘The Tamil Palaeography’ published as an appendix to his South Indian Temple Inscriptions, Vol. III, Pt. ii (1957).

At the time when the theory of an indigenous origin for the Brāhmi script was proposed, the following three important objections were advanced against such a view:

1. A fully developed and an almost perfect alphabet like the Brāhmi is impossible without long preceding years of growth. No such evidence is available.

2. The practical uniformity of the Brāhmi script in the inscriptions of Aśoka clearly points to the absence of variety in the script. If it had been indigenous, its origin must be taken back to quite a hoary antiquity and in that case we might naturally expect quite a large variety of scripts in those days. This also is absent.

3. The Brāhmi script falls into groups based on the written forms of the letters and this will show that in certain letters which have been obviously derived from others,

59. R. B. Pandey, op. cit., I, p. 35.
these derivations represent sounds which had no original forms. This will clearly show that the script was borrowed from one which had no letters representing such sounds and that additional forms had to be invented to write them.

Of these the first two objections can no longer be maintained. It is true that at the time when the above proposition was first put forward, no writing earlier than the Brahmi records of Aśoka was found in the country. But since then the discovery of Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Rupar, Lothal and other sites of the ‘Indus Valley Civilization’ has brought to light numerous seals and other objects with pictographs. K. P. Jayaswal even claimed a connecting link between the pictographic scripts of the Indus Valley and the Brahmi.60 Some of the pictographic evidences, survivals of which are found in a few caves in India and the importance of which was minimised even by scholars like Bühler add strength to the theory now.60a Further references to pictographs and sound signs are found in early Tamil literature. Taking these into account it becomes obvious that the first objection cannot be maintained any longer.

As regards the second objection, it has been pointed out earlier that even in the days of Aśoka there had been several varieties of the Brahmi script. The alphabet of the edicts is not homogeneous. “All the letters with the exception of re, jha, na, ña, ṭha, ṇa, ṭha, and ṇa have often very dissimilar forms, which are partly local and partly cursive varieties. The number of varieties in one letter sometimes amounts to nine or ten.” These varieties fall into two distinctive groups, the northern and the southern. The existence of several kinds of scripts in the country in the early days is also known to us from literature. It may be that inscriptions in those varieties have not been recovered yet. But we have records found at Bhaṭṭiprolu which are generally taken to be of the Drāviḍi type. In this connection it may be noted that we have not so far traced any record of antiquity earlier than the seventh century A.D. (excepting the Brahmi records of the pre-Christian era discussed further and the

60. Ind. Ant., XLII, p. 203.
60a. See Appendix to Chapter I.
Tirunātharkunṟu epitaphs) in the Tamil country. But this does not mean that writing was then unknown in the southern part of the country. It is possible that such records have been lost owing to some reason or other or they are hidden somewhere awaiting discovery.

Diringer wants the "Indian scholars who patriotically consider the Brāhmī as the descendant of an indigenous pre-historic script" to be reminded for the following facts:

1. "The existence in the same country of two or more successive scripts does not prove that one depends on the other; for instance the early Greek alphabets employed in Crete did not descend from the early Cretan or Minoan script.

2. Even if similarities could be proved between the shapes of the Indus Valley characters and those of the Brāhmī letters, evidence would still be lacking that the latter descended from the former, unless the likeness of the signs belonging to the two systems corresponds with the identity of their phonetic values.

3. The Indus valley writing was presumably a transitional system or a mixed syllabic-ideographic script, while the Brāhmī script was a semi-alphabet. As far as we know, no syllabic-ideographic script became alphabetic without the influence of another alphabetic script....No serious scholar has even tried show how the Indus Valley ideographic script could have developed into the Brāhmī semi-alphabetic writing.

4. The extensive Vedic literature gives no indication of the existence of writing in early Aryan India...Writing is never mentioned. Among the ancient Indian divinities there was no God of writing, but there was Sarasvati the Goddess of knowledge, learning and eloquence.

5. Only the Buddhist literature gives clear references to writing in ancient times.

6. ... ... on epigraphic grounds alone it is supposed that the Brāhmī script existed in the sixth century B.C.
7. According to the great authorities on the subject... ... the period 800 to 600 B.C., in India shows a remarkable advance in industrial life. This period coincided with the development of maritime commerce... from ports on the South-west coast of India...to Babylon. It is generally argued that the development of commerce favoured the diffusion of a knowledge of writing.

8. Very little is known about the early Aryan history of India. The fantastic theories such as that of Mr. Tilak, who attributed the earliest hymns of the Vedic literature to about 7000 B.C. or that of Shankar Balakrishna Dikshit who attributed certain Brahmans to 3800 B.C. cannot be taken seriously. The immigration of Aryan tribes into India is now attributed to the second half of the second millennium B.C., and the entire Vedic literature is attributed to the same period continuing into the early part of the first millennium B.C.

9. In the sixth century B.C., northern India witnessed a remarkable religious revolution which profoundly influenced the course of Indian history. There is no doubt that while the knowledge of writing may have favoured the diffusion of Jainism and Buddhism, these two religions, and especially the latter, contributed much to the diffusion of the knowledge of writing.

10. On the whole many different lines of evidence suggest a date between the eighth and the sixth centuries B.C. for the introduction of writing into 'Aryan India.'

These reminders are based largely on the presumption that the origin of the Brahm script is not indigenous. Still they deserve careful consideration. As R. B. Pandey rightly says the first two of them "are at best prudentials." If there are successive scripts in a country it stands to reason to think that the latter is derived from the former unless it is conclusively proved otherwise. It is well known that the imposition of a new

62. Indian Palaeography, p. 38.
script, when, there is already one in use, takes place on account of the political domination of the people with the new script over the people who adopt the new one. Or it should be due to strong economic domination which could not be easily shaken off. For the view that the Brāhmī is derived from the Semitic script there is no evidence to show that at any time in the ancient history of India it was under the domination of the Semitics. On the other hand it may be true to some extent it was in the opposite way. The second point raised by Diringer is only hypothetical as we do not know the phonetic values of the individual characters of the Indus Valley script which may or may not agree with the value of the Brāhmī script. As regards the third also we still do not know if the Indus Valley script has any phonetic value in it. Further it has been stated that importance should be given not to the invention of signs, but to the establishment of an alphabetic system of writing. It must be noted that the Semitic writing is not an alphabetic system. It is consonantal with no vowels, the want of which makes it quite imperfect. This want was supplied only by the Greeks. Further the arrangement is a jumble in complete disregard of phonetic considerations.

The fourth reminder is not based upon a proper appraisal of the value of the Vedic literature for a consideration of the question. This has been discussed in detail earlier. The statements that there was no God of writing, and that Sarasvati was only the Goddess of knowledge, learning and eloquence are not correct. We have seen earlier that Brahmā has been regarded as the inventor of writing and the images of both Brahmā and his counter-female part Sarasvati have each a book in one of their hands. The fifth reminder is not based on a proper evaluation of the back-ground of Buddhist literature which is supplied by the Vedāṅgas and the early Vedic literature. The sixth is after all a negative evidence. It can refer only to the monumental survivals and does not take into account the possibility of perishable materials being used for writing in ancient times. The seventh reminder is very inconclusive. The commercial contact between India and West Asia does not necessarily prove that the former was the borrower. It may as well be just the opposite. The eighth reminder tries to show that Indian (Aryan) civilization is comparatively younger when compared with the civilization of Western Asia. Though the theories of B.G. Tilak and S.B. Dikshit
for the beginnings of the Aryan Civilization may not be acceptable to all, almost all scholars are agreed on the fact that they may be assigned to the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Regarding the ninth point, there is no denying the fact that both Jainism and Buddhism popularised the use of the Prākṛts and the use of writing. But as said earlier the two religions presuppose the use of writing even in earlier times for the Vedic language. It may be noted that the Buddha prohibited his disciples from writing his dialogues in Chandas. There is not much force in the last argument since it presumes that the origin of writing is non-Aryan, without showing any evidence.

Thus the ten reminders of Diringer do not make out a substantial case for negating the possibility of the derivation of the Brāhmi script from some indigenous pre-existing system of writing in the country.62a

Bühler, the strongest advocate of the theory of a North Semitic origin for the Brāhmi script, while realising the phonetic and grammatical nature of the alphabet says: "Nevertheless, the oldest known forms of the Brāhmi, without a doubt, was a script framed by learned Brahmins for writing Sanskrit. This assertion is borne out not only by the remnants of the Gayā alphabet of Aśoka's stone masons which must have contained signs for the Sanskrit vowels AI and AU and which is arranged according to phonetic principles, but also by the influence of phonetic and grammatical principles which is clearly discernible in the formation of the derivative sign. The hand of the phonologist and grammarian is recognisable in the following points:

1. the development of five nasal letters and of a sign for nasalisation ........................ as well as a complete set of signs for the long vowels.

2. the derivation of the signs for the phonetically very different, but grammatically cognate sa and sa.

3. the notation of U by the half of va from which the vowel is frequently derived by samprasadana.

62a. In the above discussion I have largely followed R. B. Pandey.
4. The derivation of O from U by the addition of a stroke.

5. The non-expression of medial a in accordance with the teachings of the grammarians who consider it inherent in every consonant.

All this has so learned an appearance and is so artificial that it could only have been invented by pandits, not by traders and clerks." 63

The main characteristics of the Brāhmī alphabet may be stated as follows:

1. The Brāhmī alphabet contains independent and clear symbols for almost every pronounced sound.

2. There is identity between pronounced sounds and written alphabets.

3. The alphabet has the most exhaustive symbols for vowels and consonants, numbering as many sixty-four.

4. There are different signs for short and long vowels (with the exception of e and o which are found in the Prākṛt and the Dravidian language.)

5. There are signs for anusvāra (nasal sound = ə) anuñāsika (nasal sound = ɔ) and visarga (a sort of hard breathing = : ).

6. The alphabets are phonetically classified according to the places of pronunciation.

7. Vowels and consonants are combined with the help of medial signs. 64

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63. Ind. Ant., XXXIII, app. p. 17.
64. R. B. Pandey, op. cit., p. 48.
In accordance with the written forms the Brahmi scripts may be conveniently grouped as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a} & \quad \text{a} \\
\text{i} & \quad [i] \\
\text{u} & \quad [u] \\
\text{ka} & \quad \text{kha} \\
\text{ga} & \quad [gha] \\
\text{ca} & \quad \text{cha} \\
\text{ja} & \quad \text{jha} \\
\text{ta} & \quad \text{tha} \\
\text{na} & \quad [nä] \\
\text{pa} & \quad \text{pha} \\
\text{ma} & \quad \text{ba} \\
\text{ra} & \quad \text{la} \\
\text{ya} & \quad [ai] \\
\text{sa} & \quad \text{sa}^{65}
\end{align*}
\]

[Adapted from the article 'The Origin of the Brahmi Alphabet' by T. J. S. Taraporewala in the Proceedings of the Fourth All-India Oriental Conference, Allahabad, 1928, p. 644.]

A careful study of the above will bring out the following characteristics of the script.

1. The short and long vowels are obviously connected, the long ones being formed with the addition of a symbol to the short ones.

65. The signs within square brackets indicate those found mostly in South India or in the Dravidian type.
2. Of the vowels only $a$, $i$ and $u$, are the primary ones; the *guna* vowels $e$ and $o$ are obtained from the corresponding primary ones, $i$ and $u$ respectively.

3. The *varddhi* vowel $ai$, though obtained from the *guna* vowel $e$ in the northern variety, appears to be connected with the corresponding consonant *ya* in the south; similarly the *varddhi* vowel $au$ appears to be connected with the *guna* vowel $o$.

4. The aspirated form of the consonants are derivable from the corresponding unaspirated ones. It may even be said that the *varga* letters have been derived from the primary ones.

5. The cerebrals and dentals are closely connected with each other. In the case of *tha* and *tha*, the only difference is the addition of a dot in the centre of the former, to indicate the latter.

6. The nasals are all obviously connected.

The above will show that the Brāhmī script was designed not for the Sanskrit language but for a language having the following peculiarities:

1. Among the vowels only the three *viz.*, $a$, $i$ and $u$ were the primary ones.

2. Among the hard consonants only the primary or the first ones remained and the *varga* letters were absent.

3. Again there was no difference between the cerebrals and dentals and it had only one in the place of both of them and very likely the cerebrals were more prominent, while the dentals were not in use.

When later on the script was adopted for the Sanskrit and its allied languages, special forms had to be invented for the additional sounds.

Among the Indian languages (both classical and modern) these characteristics are the special features of the Prākrit.

Before proceeding further with the question of determining the particular language for which the Brāhmī script was designed
it is necessary to know about the language in which the earliest Brahmī inscriptions are written. The Aśokan records which are the earliest are in the Prākṛt language. In fact all the early inscriptions recovered so far are all in Prākṛt. Sanskrit appears to have taken its place in the first or second century A. D. in the north western parts of India and later gradually in other areas. Even then Prākṛt lingered on for sometime, and its influence was clearly perceptible in early Sanskrit inscriptions. It finally disappeared from about the fourth century A. D. The very fact that Prākṛt was employed for writing inscriptions even in South India, as evidenced by the Aśokan edicts at Maski, Siddhāpura, Brahmagiri, Yeṛragudi and Rājula Mandagiri, the early characters of the Pallavas of Kañci and others would clearly show that Prākṛt was the official language of the administration in those days.

The Jaina work Paññavaṇṇa-sūlta, referred to earlier, divides the Aryas into nine classes, the sixth of whom were the bhaṣārīya 'Aryans by language.' It is said of them: "They are Aryan by language, who speak the Ardhamāgadhī language (the Prākṛt in which Mahāvira is said to have preached the Jaina religion) and with whom the Brāhmī script is customary." 66 This implies that the Prākṛt was written in the Brāhmī script.

Thus the specific characteristics of the Brāhmī script would show that it was designed for the Prākṛt language.

T. N. Subrahmanyan thinks that the special features of the language for which the Brāhmī script should have been designed are found only in Tamil and hence the script should have been designed only for that language. He is alive to the fact that the earliest inscriptions are all in Prākṛt which was the official language in those days. He also notes the following as some of the more important features of the Prākṛt language.

1. Prākṛt is a simple language with a simple grammar and could be understood by all.

2. It has only the singular and the plural as in Tamil (with no dual as in Sanskrit).

3. Among the vowels \( \epsilon \), \( \eta \) as also \( ai \) and \( au \) are absent. In the cases of \( e \) and \( o \), they have both the short and long forms.

4. Of the consonants, \( sa \) and \( sa \) are not generally used and only \( sa \) takes their places.

5. The Dravidian \( \lambda \) is also found.

He says: “The special features of the Prākrit languages we have noticed above are found in the Tamil language and these also satisfy the peculiarities of the language for which the Brāhmī script was designed. Probably, the Prākrit in its original form was a South Indian product, synthesising the Dravidian language to make it understood throughout the country.” 67 In his opinion the Brāhmī script was originally designed for the Dravidian language and later on adapted for Prākrit which was evolved as a common language which was more close to the Dravidian. 68

This is a rather sweeping statement. Our knowledge of Prākrit is still comparatively very limited. Though it was the official language of the administration in the country for at least four or five centuries, and has had a rich literature, the extant literature in the language is not much, excluding the religious literature of the Buddhists and the Jains (which are in some varieties of the Prākrit) and the Sattasai (which is in what is called the Maharāṣṭrian Prākrit). The remaining literature in that language is not old. It should be assigned to different periods when Prākrit had yielded its place to Sanskrit and had ceased to be the official language. All of them bear traces of Sanskrit influence. The extant grammars of the Prākrit language are in Sanskrit and contain elaborate rules for purposes of Prakṛtising Sanskrit, thus making it an artificial and degenerate language. As it is impossible to assess the influence of Sanskrit in the manuscript materials and the published texts of the extant Prākrit literature we have to take only the texts of the Prākrit inscriptions as they are free from the manipulations of later scribes and would be able to clearly

68. Ibid.
indicate the extent of Sanskrit influence at the time when the records were incised.

As said earlier the early inscriptions are all in the Prakrit language which continued to be employed in the royal charters up to the fourth century A.D. The language would thus have attained a high level or degree of perfection in its diction and expression. Further the royal charters would have been composed in clear, precise and unambiguous terms, thus being not difficult of interpretation. Still much difficulty is experienced by scholars in their interpretation. For instance, a copper-plate inscription of just four lines of writing in the Brāhmī characters of about the fourth or third century B.C. recovered from Sohagaura in Uttar Pradesh 69 has been interpreted differently by Buhler, 70 Fleet, 71 Barua, 72 Jayaswal 73 and D.C. Sircar. 74 This would show that the language gives much difficulty with regard to its interpretation at any rate in respect of the inscriptions. The extant Prakrit grammars do not explain all the peculiarities of insessional Prakrit.

There are many Dravidian forms and usages in the Prakrit inscriptions; and this aspect has not been studied seriously so far. Further the Mahārāṣṭri Prakrit, the southern most of the regional varieties in it, is considered the Prakrit par excellence. It is also true that there are many similarities between Tamil and Prakrit and that the Dravidian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada etc. have long been known as Prakrit.

75. Mahendral has studied the Prakrit of the inscriptions in his Grammar of the Inscriptional Prakrit but the treatment follows closely the pattern of the Prakrit grammar as written in Sanskrit from the standpoint of a Sanskritist. The influence of the Dravidian languages, if any, on the Prakrit and the indebtedness of one to the other has not received the attention that they require.
But with the materials now available and the imperfect condition of our knowledge of Prākṛt it is not possible to assert the Prākṛt was a South Indian product, synthesising the Dravidian language to make it understood throughout the country. It is not necessary to discuss here the merits of the statement, as it is beyond the scope of the subject of the present enquiry. Suffice it to say that with the present available material it is too hazardous to put forth such a proposition.

Whatever that may be, there are two strong objections against the theory that the Brāhmi script should have been originally designed for the Dravidian language and later on adapted for the Prākṛt.

i. The first is the absence of special symbols for the short e and o which are considered peculiar to the Dravidian languages. Of the five vowels a, i, u, e, and o which have both the short and long in Tamil, the basic forms of the first three are taken as indicating the short and an additional symbol by way of horizontal line to the right is added to the forms of a and u, while another dot is added to the form of i. This is the same in the northern variety. For the last (other) two viz., e and o, the basic form is taken as indicating the long and a dot is added to indicate the short.  

76. Of course Prākṛt has both short and long for the two vowels; but only the long ones are met with in the inscriptions, and short ones have not been recovered so far.

The use of e and o, long and short in Tamil, according to the Tolkāppiyam has been noticed earlier. The addition of a dot to indicate short in the letters e and o, though not regularly employed in later inscriptions, is found used in the earlier ones not only for the initial vowels, but also for medial ones. Cf. for instance Velvikkudi grant of the Pāpya king Parantaka Neduvējaiyan (Ep. Ind., XVII, p. 291) and the Sendalai inscription of the Muttaraiya chieftain Perimbidjugu Muttaraiyan alias Sūran Māran (Ibid., XIII, p 135).

It is interesting to note in this connection that in the Dravīḍi type of the Brāhmi employed in the Bhaṣṭipruḷu relic caskets and in the labal inscriptions in the Tamil country, to avoid the confusion likely to be caused by the addition of dots to the consonants which in the Sanskrit records would indicate the anusvāra and the pure consonant in Tamil, it was devised that the simple form of the consonant would indicate the pure consonant without the inherent a (as in the Sanskritic usage and the Tolkāppiyam discussed above)
languages have only $e$ and $o$ always indicating long with no short. When the general principle adopted was to derive the long from the short by the addition of a symbol, here quite the opposite method has been employed in deriving the short from the long. Later on when it was felt necessary to distinguish or differentiate them, the forms then obtaining for the vowels $e$ and $o$, both for the initial and the medial ones were retained as short and special forms were devised for the long, making slight alterations in the existing forms considered as short ones. This is also in conformity with the general principle noted above. As such the special form created for the short in Tamil according to the Tolkappiyam shows clearly that the Brahmi script which had only one form for these two vowels, $e$ and $o$, which always indicated the long ones could not have been designed for the Tamil language.

ii. The Brahmi signs for the two $urdhvi$ (diphthong) vowels $ai$ and $au$ were derivatives from those of the $guna$ vowels $e$ and $o$ respectively, which in their turn were derived from the primary vowels $i$ and $u$.

This is quite in accordance or conformity with Sanskrit grammar. The Prakṛti languages do not have $ai$ and $au$; and these vowels are also not used in the Prakṛti inscriptions. But the position is quite different in Tamil. As said earlier, according to the Tolkappiyam, the Tamil vowel $ai$ is made up of the two vowels $a$ and $i$; and $au$ made up of the two $a$ and $u$. Further the vowel $a$ with the pure consonant $y$ i.e. $ay$ may also be used for $ai$. The commentators say that similarly $au$ (i.e. the vowel $a$ and the pure consonant $v$) may be

and that one or two horizontal strokes were added at the top to the right of the letter to indicate short $a$ and long $a$ respectively of the vowel-consonants. But no such special device appears to have been made with regard to $e$ and $o$. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says that in the case of the combined consonants the occurrence of short $e$ and short $o$ (in the Brahmi inscriptions of the Tamil country) deserves particular attention, the two being the special characteristics of the Dravidian alphabet. (Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference, Madras, 1924, p. 283).

But it has not been possible to make out this difference between the short and long of the two vowels $e$ and $o$ in the photograph of the records.

77. *akara ikaram sikharam akum and akara ukaran auhram akum*, (Sūtras 54 and 55.)
The alternative form for the vowel *ai* found in the Brahmi inscriptions of South India (*ψ*) which is closely connected with the linear form of *ya* was probably influenced by the above principle. No such symbol has so far been traced for the vowel *au*. But the standard forms in the standard Brahmi are those found in North India. The southern symbol for *ai* appears to have been a later invention. If it had been the original form certainly this would have been used instead of inventing a new one with the addition of a horizontal stroke at the top to the left of the symbol *e*. This also shows that the Brahmi could not have been devised for Tamil.

T. N. Subrahmanyan is aware of this difficulty; and he takes note of the first of the above two. But he explains it as follows: “Later on Sanskrit elements were introduced to suit the needs of the new letters, and in the course of this process, some symbols not required for the Sanskritised Prakrit got eliminated. And finally when it became the official language it spread throughout the length and breadth of the country with royal authority behind, and displaced the then existing varieties of the script. It should be noted side by side that no inscription in the other co-existing scripts has been found.” 78a. This is purely hypothetical and this line of argument will not help solving the problem.

He cites one analogy in favour of the proposition. Both the Grantha and the Nagari scripts are evolved from the Brahmi, the former in the Tamil country and the latter in North India. But after the advent of the Nagari in South India, the indigenous Grantha has almost disappeared and probably may become extinct in due course. It is true Tamil was a highly developed language with a literature and grammatical works of its own even before the beginnings of the historical period. Tolkappiyar himself refers in his works to the previous authors of Tamil grammar. Though they have been lost, they indicate that there must have been in existence some sort of writing then. What it was we do not know. But one thing is clear. The script used for the Tamil language in

78. akarattu imbar yakarop-p-puliyum ai en nefuksinai may.yera-lomrum
(Sutra, 56.)

the days of Tolkāppiyar was derived from a script designed for a language which had no sounds for short e and o. Then it could not have been the original script designed for Brāhmi. It might have been anything, not excluding the possibility of proto Brāhmi. We have no means of ascertaining that. In the absence of sufficient materials, even to suggest the possibility there is no use in speculation, and it does not bring us nearer the solution.

Under the circumstances we are left only with the alternative proposition that the Brāhmi script was designed for the Prākṛt language. We shall therefore have to take the Brāhmi script as an indigenous evolution in this country, originally designed for the Prākṛt language and later on adapted for the Sanskrit and other languages.
APPENDIX

THE INDUS SCRIPT

Excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa in West Panjab in the third decade of the present century, Rupar in East Panjab, Lothal in Saurashtra in the last decade and Kalibangan in Rajasthan now being conducted as also a large number of smaller excavations conducted at less important sites in the present Pakistan area and intensive explorations in the regions of Baluchistan and East Persia have revealed the existence of an ancient civilization in the region, usually referred to as the Indus Valley Civilization.

The 'Indus Valley Civilization' which bore some characteristics common to the civilizations of the river valleys in Mesopotamia and Egypt has created various problems which are still engaging the attention of scholars. Many questions relating to them elude an acceptable or satisfactory answer. Among such questions may be mentioned the following: Who were the Indus Valley people? Was the civilization an indigenous one or a foreign one? If it was a foreign civilization which is the probable country from which it came to India? What language did the people speak? What is the script that they used for writing? Much has been written on these questions. But there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars on any of them.

With regard to the authors of the 'Indus Valley Culture' different views are expressed by writers on the subject. H. de Terra feels that the Indus Civilization must have evolved from an indigenous culture. Stuart Piggot says: "the Harappa culture is known only in its mature form; it has no known beginnings, no tentative early phases before the outlines are firmly fixed. An origin outside India is inherently improbable, but where and in what form this origin was is quite unknown." Mortimer Wheeler thinks that "this civilization was the result

2. Prehistoric India, p. 140.
of environmental opportunity offered to a people of creative genius which would account for its rapid development,” and “that without that creative imagination no stretch of time could have provided a substitute.” Gordon Childe also feels that this culture must have evolved as a result of “years of patient effort.” Efforts are made by some scholars to study the problem and interpret the culture in the light of the background of Vedic Culture, and connect the people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa with the Aryans themselves. There are scholars who are disposed to think that they were of the Dravidian stock. The boldest exponent of this theory was Rev. Fr. H. Heras who says that people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were Dravidians (Tamil) who spoke the proto-Tamil language. Hunter is of the opinion “that the Indus Valley prior to the arrival of the Aryans was inhabited by Dravidians, and that the Brahuis of the neighbourhood are a remnant of this stock,” though at the same he is careful enough to add, “but this is not certain, nor would it exclude the possibility of a riverine or a maritime folk of a different race being responsible for Mohenj-daro and Harappa.”

Some scholars are, however, definitely of the opinion that the ‘Indus Valley’ people were immigrants. D. H. Gordon, writes, for instance, that they “were some immigrant people (who) brought with them the knowledge of those things which form the basis of civilised living, and, by exploiting and adapting this knowledge to suit their new environment, were able by their drive and vision to establish within the matter of a hundreded or so years, the pattern of culture which was to endure for a thousand. No further search is going to bring to light either in India or some adjacent country a Harappan

5. Among them are Sankarananda (The Rig Vedic Culture of the Prehistoric Indus, II, p. 45); B.M. Barua, (Indo Iranian I, pp. 15-21) and A.P. Karmarkar, (Prācyauṇī, I, pp. 99-101.) T.N. Ramachandra and T.G. Aravamudhan also are almost of the same view, but their writings have not been published yet fully.
city site, where the constituents of this culture can be shown
to have evolved for millennia, parallel to, but separate from
the development of Sumer, Elam and ancient Iran."\textsuperscript{8}

But it is not so easy to determine who the authors of the
Indus Culture were. The only available material evidence about
them consists of a few human skeletons and skulls found among
the ruins. It is surmised from them that the people of the
Indus Valley "comprised at least four different racial types,
viz., proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Alpinoid, and Mongoloid."

"The craniological evidence speaks not only of the diverse
racial elements, but also of free racial mixture."\textsuperscript{9} However,
as Wheeler says, "the number of skeletons analysed to date
is far too small to support any generalized estimate of the
racial characters of the Harappans. All that can be said is
that, as might be expected, the population of the Indus cities
was as mixed as is that of most of their successors."\textsuperscript{10}

With regard to the antiquity of the Indus culture, most
scholars are agreed that it may be assigned to the third millennium
B.C. The civilization of the Indus Valley which was essentially
chalcolithic, iron not being found in any stratum in the course
of excavations, bears similarities with the proto-historic civilization
of Mesopotamia and Elam.

Some seals of Indian origin or style have been found at places
like Ur, Kish, Tell Asmar and other sites in Mesopotamia and Iran;
and they are of some help in roughly fixing the period of the
Indus Valley Civilization referred to usually as the Harappa Culture.
As Wheeler says, "the Indus civilization is dated primarily by its
contacts with the proto-historic cities of Mesopotamia in the latter
half of the third millennium B.C. and the earlier centuries of the
second."\textsuperscript{11} After an examination of the available evidence of such
contacts Wheeler thinks that though there could have been
contacts between the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia and other

\textsuperscript{8} The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture, p. 57-8.

\textsuperscript{9} The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I. (The Vedic Age),
p. 193.

\textsuperscript{10} The Indus Civilization, (The Cambridge History of India, Supplementary Volume), p. 52.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p. 84.
kingdoms from earlier times "the bulk of the known date of the Harappan sites may equate rather with the Akkadian (Sargonid) and post Akkadian periods than with any considerable portion of the Early Dynastic." 12 But the evidence for contact between the Indus Civilization and the west in pre-Sargonic period being not impressive, "on current dating the maximum period required to cover these possibilities would be 2500-1500 B.C., with a strong focus on c. 2350 B.C." 13 The civilization must, however, have had "a long period of antecedent development." It continued obviously for a long time after the time of Sargon, as may be seen from the finds at Ur, Lagash and some other places of a few seals of Indian origin which are post-Akkadian and are assignable to the middle of the second millennium B.C.

The most noteworthy feature of the culture of the Indus Valley relates to the use of an indigenous script which appears on a large number of beautifully cut seals of steatite from various sites. Most of them are probably amulets. About 800 of the seals have been inscribed. Many scholars have tried to decipher the writing; but it has defied their attempts. Most scholars have defined the writing as one of stylised pictographs. It must be noted that, though the civilization of the Indus Valley extended over a fairly long period, there was not much development in the form of the letters. "The script is found in one stage only, so that we cannot trace its genesis from the pictographic to the ideographic or phonetic, or its later development to any of the scripts of India." 14 Antecedent evolution till the signs became standardised cannot be ruled out. However, "the script remains in what may be called, on Egyptian analogy, the hieroglyphic state; it has not degenerated nor been worn down by use to conventional summaries like the Egyptian hieratic, the Babylonian cuneiform or the Chinese writing." 15

Attempts have been made by various scholars to decipher the script on the seals. L. A. Waddell, one of the earliest scholars to attempt the difficult task, thought that there were links between

13. Ibid., p. 86.
15. Wheeler. The Indus civilization, p. 82.
the Sumerian script and the Mohenjo-daro script, compared the signs in both of them, tried to read all the inscriptions as Sumerian and concluded that the inhabitants of Mohenjo-daro were Aryans. 16 Langdon connected these signs with the Brahmi script of later times and said that the phonetic values of the signs were utmost biconsonantal. 17 C. J. Gadd also held similar views and concluded that the writing was at least in part syllabic, the language of the inscriptions Indo-Aryan and that the seal inscriptions were in general names. 18 Pran Nath gave alphabetic values to a number of signs of the Indus Valley script, compared them with those of the Brahmi script and like Langdon, thought that the latter was derived from the former. According to him the strokes which appear within or round the original signs "show a remarkable resemblance to the vowel signs used in the earliest Brahmi writing of southern as well as Northern India." 19 According to him "the language is understood to be some form of Prakrit or old pre-Vedic language." 20 Sudhansu Kumar Ray has tried to bring together some indications to show that the signs on the seals are alphabetic along with many picture signs which have only noncommittal syllabic values but having no reference whatever to the apparent pictorial meaning of the signs. 20a W. M. Flinders Petrie, the well-known Egyptologist, thought that the script of Mohenjo-daro had something in common with the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which were ideographic. According to him the seals of Mohenjo-daro contain not the name of the officials but only their title. 21 His views, however, have not received acceptance among scholars; particularly on the ground that "if all the seals had belonged to officials, then almost every inhabitant of Mohenjo-daro must have been an official personage and member of the court." 22 M. G. de

18. Ibid., II. p. 314.
20. Ibid.
Hevesy thought there was close similarity between the Indus Valley script and the recent script of the Easter Islands, a quiet remote islet in the Pacific Ocean, about 2500 miles to the west of the coast of Chile. He has compared about 130 signs of both the scripts. But in spite of the external likeness between the two scripts, points like the distance of time between the period of one script and the other, of space extending over thousands of miles, "the lack of any evidence proving the existence of intermediate script in the remote age of the Indus valley script" have to be taken into account before postulating any connection between the two. G. R. Hunter has made a detailed study of the script in its varied aspects. After tabulating all the signs "he believes that he has thereby obtained the interpretation of certain symbols, such as the ordinal suffix, the ablative and dative terminations, the numeral signs"... On the basis of the resemblance between the Indus Valley script on the one hand and the Sumerian and the Elamite on the other he, like some other scholars, is inclined to suggest that the Indus Valley script came from Western Asia. He says: "Many of the signs bear a remarkable resemblance to the monumental script of Ancient Egypt. The entire body of anthropomorphous signs has Egyptian equivalents which are virtually exact. And it is interesting to note that not one of these anthropomorphous signs have the remotest parallel in Sumerian and Proto-Elamite. On the other hand there are many of our signs that are exactly paralleled in the Proto-Elamite and Jemdet-Nasr tablets such as that have no conceivable morphographic equivalent in Egyptian. One is bound to conclude that the presumption is strong that our script has been borrowed in part from Egypt, and in part from Mesopotamia. Of course there is a considerable proportion of signs that are common to all three scripts, such as the signs for tree, fish, bird etc. But this is coincidental, and indeed inevitable in the very nature of pictography. It is only safe to draw inferences of casual connection where the less obvious and more conventionalised ideograms, especially those that are so conventionalised that their pictographic origin is hardly determinable, show a marked correspondence; and in a lesser degree, where easily recognisable

also an English rendering of the same in J.F.H., XIII, pp. 1-17

pictographs show the same variations. Now the latter is very marked as between our script and proto-Elamite, as will appear from a study of the Comparative Table. Of course it is possible that all three had a common ancestry, and that the Egyptian element in our script alone was borrowed. It is even possible that all four scripts may have had a common origin. But this is an enquiry that does not concern us here, and which in the nature of pictography, would be very hard to solve without the aid of anthropological evidence as to whether or not there was in prehistoric times racial affinity between the inhabitants of the Nile, Euphrates and Indus valleys." He believes that the script was mainly phonetic and not alphabetic, though he acknowledges that its origin was pictographic and ideographic. He further feels that the Brāhmī script was derived from the script of Mohenjo-daro. B. Hrozny, famous for his interpretation of the Hittite inscriptions, thought that the Indus Valley people were Indo-Europeans and even Proto-Hittites who reached India even before the Rgvedic Aryans. He connects the Indus scripts with the Hittite hieroglyphic writing. According to Hrozny there were nearly 110 symbols which were important phonetic signs, of which "no less than 86 are considered as the symbols for six sounds only; 45 signs for the sound si, se, sa and a." But his interpretation has not been received well by scholars. It is remarked, for instance, that "While acknowledging Hrozny’s brilliancy as a decipherer, one cannot help feeling that he has tackled too difficult a task."

26. Ibid., pp. 21-19.
27. Ibid., p. 45. Among the objections raised against such a theory two are important:
   a) The pictographs of the Indus valley are solitary finds and they do not occur elsewhere in India.
   b) The intervening space of about 2000 or 2500 years still remains a blank and no inscriptions have been found which may be assigned to the intermediate period.
   It is the spade of the archaeologist that must bridge the gulf and make available to us relics of the dark period that may throw light on the question.
29. Ibid.
Herr P. Merggi, who argued that the authors of the Indus Script were not a Sanskrit speaking people, thought that the script was ideophonographic, to which the Hittite hieroglyphic script bore some similarity. He believed that the documents were administrative seals.\textsuperscript{30}

Swami Sankarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission expressed the view that the script was a Tantric one.\textsuperscript{31} Dr. B. M. Barua also thought that "the key to the Indus Valley inscriptions lies in the Tantric Texts."\textsuperscript{32} While Dr. Karmarkar read the inscription in Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{33} Rev. Fr. H. Heras who was strongly of the view that the remains of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were non-Aryan, and probably only Dravidian, thought that the people were Dravidians who spoke the Proto-Dravidian language. According to him the script is picto-phonographic. The signs of Mohenjo-daro do not stand for syllables or consonant sounds only, but express full words.\textsuperscript{34} He "has sought to read old Tamil in these seals from the South Punjab and Sin\textsuperscript{35}; but it is highly improbable that in epigraphs from a culture-age going back to, say, 2500 B.C., there should be found a language which is not much older than 500 A.D."\textsuperscript{36} As Diringer says, "the attempts of Fr. H. Heras S. J. to equate the most up-to-date linguistic forms with the undeciphered seals belonging to the third millennium B.C. might put the unwary on the wrong track."\textsuperscript{37}

In spite of various valiant attempts by scholars mentioned above to read and interpret, it is not possible to say anything definite regarding the script since no one has been able to find the key for reading and interpreting the scripts. All the


\textsuperscript{31} See Rev. H. Heras op. cit., pp. 44-52.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 53.56.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp. 56-7.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 61-90.

\textsuperscript{35} The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. I, (The Vedic Age), p. 156.

\textsuperscript{36} op.cit., p. 338.
suggestions given are only tentative. Even an external classification of the symbols is not always possible. There is no unanimity of opinion about the number of signs. The number of characters listed comes to 396 according to some, and 288 or 253 according to others. Opinion is also divided among scholars with regard to the direction of writing. But the general view seems to be that the inscriptions begin from the right, but when there are more than one line they are boustrophedon. 37 Wheeler is inclined to think that the script “is probably syllabic, with the admixture of some pictorial representations or ideograms and perhaps determinatives, on the lines of cuneiform.” 37a According to him a large number of letters have accents added to them “a remarkable feature which itself emphasises phonetic maturity.” Further “the script bears no ascertainable relationship with any contemporary or near-contemporary script.” 38

While dealing with the problem of the origin of the Indus Valley script Diringer writes: “It seems obvious that the Indus valley script which is rather schematic and linear on the extant inscriptions, was originally pictographic, but it is impossible to decide whether it was truly indigenous or imported. A connection between this script and the common ancestor of the cuneiform writing and of the early Elamite script is probable, but it is impossible to determine what the connection was. Some solutions—none of them can be considered certain—may be suggested, for instance:

1. The Indus valley script was perhaps derived from an at present unknown, early script, which may have been the common ancestor also of the cuneiform and early Elamite writings.

2. All three might have been local creations, one probably the prototype of the cuneiform or of the early Elamite script being an original invention and the other two

37: See B. B. Lal, Indian Archaeology Since Independence, p. 18 and A. H. Dani, Indian Palaeography, p. 16.

37a. The Indus Civilization, p. 82.

38. Ibid.
being creations inspired by the knowledge of the existence of writing.\textsuperscript{39}

But it should not be forgotten that according to ancient tradition (i) the authors of the ancient Egyptian Civilization migrated to Egypt from Western Asia; (ii) the Phoenicians were colonists in Tyre and the Sumerians themselves migrated to Sumer from outside by sea. It should also be noted that the Hittite inscriptions in similar script are written in the Indo-European language.\textsuperscript{40}

In spite of all that has been written on the subject, the Indus Valley script will have to remain a mystery till such a time as a key of an unimpeachable character or "a bilingual inscription and a known language, or a long inscription with significant recurrent features" is found.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39} Diringer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41} It is possible to contend that a large number of pieces of prehistoric pottery inscribed with written signs which are probably alphabetic in value have been discovered in the erstwhile Hyderabad State. (\textit{The Journal of the Haiderabad Archaeological Society}, 1917, pp. 57 ff. and in the ancient Purâpa coins with similar signs in the extreme south of India (\textit{Mysore Archaeological Report}, 1935.) It should be noted however, that these pottery marks have not been satisfactorily worked upon. Further they do not bear much resemblance to the Indus Valley signs. Their phonetic values are also not known.
CHAPTER III

A. ANTIQUITY OF WRITING IN INDIA

Indian traditions of both the orthodox and heterodox sects claim great antiquity for the art of writing in India. According to them it was created by Brahmā, the God of creation. The Narada Sūta, a redaction of the Manu Samhitā and a work on ancient Hindu Law usually assigned to the 6th century A.D. (referred to by Bāna, the court poet of Harṣa of Kanauj) states: "Had not Brahmā the creator created the written (literature), the best of eyes, this world could have never attained to its happy condition." Bṛhaspati in his Vārttika on Manu mentions the same tradition when he says, "because in a period of six months memory is confused regarding a particular thing, in very early times the creator produced letters depicted on leaves." Again Kālidāsa stresses the value of learning the art of writing and says, "by the proper grasp of the art of writing one reaches the vast treasure of literature, as one approaches the ocean through the mouth of a river."  

There are evidences in the Vedas themselves that the art of writing was known even during that age. The Rgveda mentions the names of metres like the Gayātri, Anuṣṭubha, Brāhmi, Virāja, Trishtubha, Jagati etc. The Vajasaneyi Samhitā of the Yajurveda mentions some additional metres like pańkli, dvipada, tripada, catuṣpadā gaṇpada etc. The Atharvaveda contains reference to eleven metres. The names of metres and the technical terms

1. S.B.E., XXXIII, pp. 58 ff.  
NāKarīṣyaṇyaṇi Brahmā likhitam ekaṣyuruttamam  
tatreyamasā lokasya nā bhaviṣyaḥ suḥsā gatiḥ  
See also Bṛhaspati’s Vārttikā on Manu, Ibid., p. 304.  
2. Śaṃmasi ke tu samaye bhrantiḥ samjñyaṁ yataḥ  
dhārāksāṁ sṛṣṭiṁ sāṁhitāṁ parāpayāṁ purā  
(quoted in Ahnikatattva.)  
3. Līperyathā vad grahapatena vanam nade  
mukheneva samudramanvīgaś!  
(Raghuvamsa, III, 23).  
4. X, 16; 132. 3. 4.  
5. XI, 8; XIV, 19, XXIII. 33; XXVII. 14.  
P—13
regarding the composition could have been possible only after the systematisation of the rules of prosody; and this presupposes a knowledge of the art of writing. Reference is also made in the Vedic literature to high figures involving knowledge of complicated Mathematics which could have been possible only with the use of written numbers and Arithmetic. The Ṛgveda mentions that king Sāvarṇi gave away in alms one thousand cows with the number eight marked on the ears of each. This custom is also noticed by Paṇini. The Vajasaneyi Samhitā of the Yajurveda includes the astronomer (gaṇīka) in the list of persons connected with the sacrifice Puruṣamedha. The Taittiriya Samhitā mentions the following numbers in the ascending order: daśa (10), sata (100), sahasra (1000), ayuta (10,000), niyuta (1,00,000), prāyuta (10,00,000), arbuda (1,00,00,000), nyarbuḍa (10,00,00,000), sambuḍra (1,00,00,00,000), madhya (10,00,00,00,000), anta (1,00,00,00,00,000) and prārdha (10,00,00,00,00,000). References to high figures are found in the Brāhmaṇa literature also. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions minute divisions of a day and night. It says that a day and a night together consist of 30 muhūrtas, one muhūrta of 15 ksīpras one ksīpa of 15 etarhis, one etarhi of 15 idānims and one idānim of 15 prānas. It will be seen from the above that a day and a night contain 30 × 15 × 15 × 15 × 15 = 15,18,750 prānas. One prāna is equal to 1/17 of a second. These calculations would have been possible only with written figures, and imply the existence and a good knowledge of the art of writing.

There are other pieces of evidence also which would suggest the antiquity of writing in India. The Nirukta of Yāska, a work on the etymology of words, contains the names of some of his predecessors, namely Audumbarāyana, Āgrāyana, Arunavabha, Aupamanyava, Gārgya, Gālava, Kāṭhakya, Kautsa, Carmāsiras, Taitiki, Varṣyāyani, Śākalya, Satabalākṣa, Śakāṭāyana, Sakapiṇi and Śthulāśīivi. This list of the predecessors of Yāska in the field of technical works on language takes them to a very early period as also the art of writing.

7. Sahassam me dadato aṣṭakāryaḥ. X. 62. 7.
8. gramanyam gaṇakamabhikroṣṭham tanmahase. XXX. 20.
9. IV. 40. 11. 4; VII. 2. 21. 1.
11. XII. 3. 2. 1.
12. The list is only selective.
ANTIOQUITY OF WRITING IN INDIA

The Upaniṣads contain references to aṅgaras or letters. It is said they were not only pronounced but also written since they were associated with suffix kasa (something to be made) and with varṇa (something to be coloured or painted). Some of the Upaniṣads mention varṇa (written letters) and mātras (medial signs) together.

Some of the Āranyakas make minute differentiation between aśman (sibilants), śparśa (mutes), svara (vowels) and anīstha (semi-vowels), as also between vyañjana (consonants) and ghosa (voice) and between mūrdhanya (cerebral) and dautya (dental). There is a discussion on sandhi (joining of letters). Further the composition of the sacred aṅkara, om, is explained there as a combination of letters a, u and m. It must be remembered that the Upaniṣads, Āranyakas and the Brahmanas which are all largely composed in prose constitute a voluminous literature, and could not have been handed down from generation to generation merely by rote. The existence of many technical terms on grammar, etymology and prosody in them also makes one think that there must have been some knowledge of writing even then.

There are definite references to the art of writing in some ancient works. For instance, the Aṣṭadhyāyi of Pāṇini contains a few words which have some bearing on writing in general. Pāṇini has been assigned to the fourth century B.C. by Max Muller and Bühler and to the eighth century by Goldstucker. The words bearing on writing are, for instance, līpi (script), līpikara (writer or scribe), yavanāni (Greek script).

13. Himkāra iti tryakṣaram prastāva iti tryakṣaram tatoṣamam (Chhandogya, II. 10).
15. Varṇāḥ svarāḥ mātra balam (Taittirīya, I. 1.)
16. Aitarte, III, 2, 1; II, 2, 4; III, 2, 6; III, 1, 5.
17. 13.2.21. Bühler thinks that the words "Dipi and Lipi are probably derived from the old Persian Dipi, which cannot have reached India before the conquest of the panjāb by Darius about B.C. 500, and which later became Līpi". (Indian Palæography, p. 5.) Pandey has well pointed out that the word is not derived from dipi. See his Indian Palæography, p. 11, fn. 1.
18. 4-1-49.
graniha (a book), svarita (a mark in writing) etc. Pāṇini mentions the practice of the marking of the ears of cattle with the signs of figures 5 and 8 as also religious symbols like the svastika, ष. Further he refers to a number of earlier writers on Sanskrit Grammar, among them being Apiṣāli, Kaśyapa, Galava, Gārgya, Cakravarman, Bhāradvāja, Yāska, Sakalya, Sakaṭāyana, and Senaka. All this shows the long history of Sanskrit grammar, before Pāṇini. This could have been possible only if the art of writing had been known to the earliest of them. Curiously enough Max-Muller writes, "I maintain that there is not a single word in Pāṇini's terminology which presupposes the existence of writing," and thus ignores the above references. He has also overlooked the fact that a work on advanced and developed grammar itself presupposes writing. In this connection it may be mentioned that the languages or dialects of the words without a definite knowledge of the script has not been known to possess a codified grammar.

The vedāṅga-śikṣa (the science of correct pronunciation), kalpa (ritual, procedure or litany), nirukta (etymology), vyākaraṇa (grammar), chhandas (prosody) and jyotiṣa (astronomy), all of which constitute very ancient branches of the technical literature of India, also lead one to think that the art of writing was not unknown in India in ancient times.

The Sūtra literature which has by common consent been assigned to the period between the eighth and the third centuries

19. 1-3-75; 3-87; 4.3-116.
20. 1-3-11.
21. 6-3-115.
22. 1-2-25.
23. 6-3-61.
24. 8-3-20.
25. 6-1-130.
26. 7-2-63.
27. 2-4-63.
28. 8.3.19.
29. 3-4-111.
30. 5-4-112.
31. 6-1-123.
32. History of Sanskrit Literature, p. 262.
B. C. also bears evidence of the knowledge of writing in the country. For example the *Vasiṣṭha Dharma Śūtra* mentions written documents for purposes of legal evidence."

The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, which belongs to the fourth century B. C., makes definite mention of writing. Among such references in it are the following:

i. Having gone through the tonsure ceremony the student should learn the alphabet and writing."

ii. In the fifth (*nalika*) the king should correspond in writs (*patra sampreṣāṇena*) with the assembly of his ministers."

iii. With signs and writings he should send his spies."

iv. The writer should be prompt in composing, elegant in writing and able in reading documents."

The epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* contain a number of terms relating to writing, such as *likh, lekha, lekhana, lekhaka* etc. The two works are usually assigned to a period before the Mauryan age, though not in its present form. Some are inclined to think that there are some interpolations in the work. Still Bühler himself thinks that "though the testimony of the Epics can, therefore, only be used with due reserve, yet it is undeniable that their terms regarding writing and writers are archaic.""

Literary works in classical Sanskrit such as epics, *smṛtis, kavyas*, dramas and works dealing with polity, morals and technical subjects contain innumerable references to the art of writing in India. Though such of them as are posterior to the days of Aśoka may not be of much value as evidence

33. XVI, 10-14-15.
34. 1.5.2. *Vṛita caula karma lipisaṃkhyanam ecopeyukṣita.*
36. 1.12.8.
37. II. 10.2.
38. *Ind. Ant., XXXIII, App., p. 4.*
of the earlier existence of writing in India, the Brahmanical literature of the country assignable to the period before the rise of Buddhism are of much value for a study of the problem of the antiquity of writing in India.

Besides the early Brahmanical literature of the country, the early Jaina and Buddhist literature also bears testimony to the knowledge of writing in India from very early times. The early Jaina works, the *Samavayaṅga Sutta*, the traditional date of which is considered to be about 300 B.C., and the *Paññavaṅga Sutta*, traditionally ascribed to about 168 B.C. mention eighteen kinds of scripts as then in use in the country. The latter work divides the Āryas into nine classes, the sixth of which is the bhagaṅgiya, ‘Aryan by language’, who speak the Ardhamāgadhi (the Prākrit in which Mahāvīra is said to have preached the Jaina religion and with whom the Brāhmī script is customary). The *Bhagavati Sūtra*, another Jaina work, has *Namo Bhambhiya līviye* (Salutation to the Brāhmī script).

Among the Buddhist works the Mahāvastu gives a list of thirty names as the varieties of script prevailing in the country. The *Lalitavistara*, a work in Sanskrit dealing with the life of the Buddha, describes how the Buddha as a boy went to the *lipi sala* (a school where writing was taught) and how Viśvāmitra, his teacher, taught him letters on a writing board of sandal wood and with a golden pen. The book further states that sixty-four kinds of scripts were in use in the country and gives their names. The numbers eighteen, thirty, sixty-four etc., are considered auspicious and some scholars hold the view that these numbers should not be taken seriously. Anyhow, these clearly show that many varieties of scripts were in use in the country even in those days.

The works included in the *Vinaya pitaka* commend the art of writing (*lekhana*) to the monks on account of its


40. It is not easy to fix correctly its date. But as the work was translated into the Chinese in 368 A.D. it may be taken to belong to a period at least one or two centuries earlier.

41. Ch. X.
innocence." The Mahavagga mentions lekha (writing), ganana (arithmetic) and rūpa which formed the curriculum of studies in the primary schools in ancient India. The Jātakas which contain stories of the earlier lives of the Buddha refer to phalaka (wooden writing-board) and varṇaka (wooden pen) as used for writing." They also mention writing in connection with official and private letters," royal proclamations" documents relating to family affairs," moral and political maxims," usury and bonds" and manuscripts." The Suttanta is a book of sermons on the conduct of the bhikṣus. Among the prohibitions for them was the Akkharika (Aksarika), a game that was played by children and in which one had to recognise letters written with fingers either on one's back or in the sky."  

Foreigners who visited India in ancient times also testify to the antiquity of writing in India. The earliest of them were the Greeks, some of whom, on account of their stay in the country for some time, had occasions to observe closely the general conditions of the people in all their aspects. One of them was Nearchus, one of the generals of Alexander during his invasion of India. He says that the people of the Panjab knew the art of manufacturing paper out of cotton and tattered cloths, obviously for writing  

42. Bhikkupacitiya, 2. 2.  
43. Ibid., 65. 1.  
44. Ch. X.  
45. Kathaka Jātaka; Kāma Jātaka.  
46. Rūru Jātaka.  
47. Kanha Jataka.  
49. Rūru Jātaka.  
50. Bühler, Indian Studies, III. 120.  
51. Brahmagāla sutta, 14; Samaññaphalasutta, 49.  

Terms like lekha, lekaka, likhata, akkha, chindati etc., and also the writing materials of wood, bamboo, pāñcito (leaves), suwannapata, etc. are mentioned in early Buddhist literature. Bühler opines that these refer to the primitive character of writing, that is incision of signs on hard materials like stone. (Ind. Ant., XXXIII, App. p. 5). Only the word chindati suggests incision, which may apply to writing on palm leaves (tilapata). But the writing on bhūrjapata (birch bark) was done with the aid of inks. Further it is also to be remembered that even for writing on stone, the signs are first traced on stone by ink or chalk or some visible solution, and then the masons inscribe the signs following the tracing.
purposes. Q. Curtius, another Greek writer refers to the inner tender bark of certain trees used for writing. It was probably the bhrujapata or birch-bark. Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleukos Niketor at the court of Candragupta Maurya, writes in his Indica that for the convenience of travellers mile stones were fixed on the roads at intervals of ten stadia so that they could know the distance between rest-houses. He also refers to the current practice of expounding varṣaphala, i.e. the good and bad prospects of the coming year according to an almanac as also the preparation of horoscopes for individuals. These would clearly prove that the art of writing was known and practised in India in the fourth century B.C. They do not hint anywhere that writing in India was of foreign origin.

Certain other foreign sources also indicate the tradition that the art of writing was indigenous to the country. The Fa-Wan-Shu-Lin, a Chinese encyclopaedia says that the Brahmi script, written from left to right, was invented by Fan (Brahma). The celebrated Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang also refers to the very early invention of writing in India. Alberuni, the Arab scholar, records a slightly different story. He says that the Hindus had once forgotten the art of writing and that through a divine inspiration it was rediscovered by Vyāsa, the son of Parāśara. According to him the history of the Indian alphabets would begin with the commencement of the Kaliyuga in 3101 B.C. This tradition got currency evidently due to the fact that Vyāsa is belived to have collected the Vedas and classified them into four and composed the eighteen Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata.

It may be noted that Megasthenes and Hiuen Tsang were minute observers of the customs and manners of the people and recorded their observations. Alberuni, an Arab full of Semitic

51a. Strabo, XV. 717. Bühler takes this to mean that they wrote letters on well-beaten cotton cloth (Ind. Ant., XXXIII, App. 6).
55. Beal, Si yu ki, I, p. 77.
56. Sachau, Alberuni's India, I, 171.
sympathies would not have missed to record the Semitic origin of
the Brahmi script, if he had got even the slightest hint about it.
On the other hand he says that the script was invented in India
itself. His statement is quite in conformity with the literary
traditions about the origin of the script preserved in the country.

Thus all the evidence, traditional, literary, circumstantial and
inferential points to the great antiquity of the art of writing in
India from the remotest past and its indigenous evolution. It is,
however, unfortunate that such antiquity has not been substanti-
tated by the discovery of specimens of writing going back to such
antiquity. In fact the earliest datable records so far discovered
are the royal edicts of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka (273-236 B.C.).

It is true that there are some records and coins bearing
writing assigned to the pre-Aśoka period, viz., fourth and fifth
centuries B.C. But scholars are not unanimous in their dating of
these records, some of them bringing down such writing to as
late as the first and second centuries B.C., in the post-Aśoka
period. The following are the important ones among them:

i. **The Eran Coin Legend**

A coin with a legend has been found at Eran near
Jabbaipore. The legend is believed to run from right
to left. Bühler uses this as one of his strong points
for postulating the theory of a Semitic origin for the
Brahmi script. The forms of some of the letters in
the legend are considered to be earlier than those
in the Aśokan inscriptions.

ii. **The Taxila Coin Brahmi Legend**

On palaeographic and numismatic grounds it is placed
in the fourth century B.C.

iii. **The Mahastham Stone Plaque Inscription**

This inscription was found in the Bogra district in
Bengal. It records an endowment to the Pañcavargiya

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59. Cunningham, *op. cit.*
(order of the) Buddhist monks. It is also considered to be pre-Asoka.  

iv. *The Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Inscription*:

It was discovered at Piprahwa in the Basti District in Uttar Pradesh. It records the dedication of a relic casket containing the portion obtained by the Śākyas out of the mortal remains of the Buddha and it can be assigned to c. 483 B.C. the date of his nirvāṇa.

v. *The Sohgoura Copper Plate Inscription*:

This was discovered in 1894 in the Gorakpur District in Uttar Pradesh. The inscription which is in Prākrit runs to four lines and records the provision of grains and fodder during periods of famine.

vi. *The Badhi Inscription*:

The inscription was discovered in the Ajmer District. It reads *Virāya Bhagavate Catusate Vase* (dedicated to Lord (Maha) Vira in his 84th year). It is assigned to 443 B.C. (527—84).

As said above there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars with regard to the dates of these inscriptions.


These inscriptions engraved on the relic caskets found at Bhaṭṭiprolu in the Brähmi script of the Draviḍi type are unique. Bühlner who has edited them in the


63. Ojah. Prācina Lipimalā. The inscription is preserved in the Rajputana Museum, Ajmer.


4. In the Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh.
Epigraphia Indica assigns to them a date slightly earlier than the period of Aśoka."

Scholars who are unwilling or hesitant to assign high antiquity to the art of writing in India mainly base their conclusions on the argumentum ex silentium, ignoring some of the literary references to it cited above giving later dates to some others. But one thing they cannot ignore, namely the internal evidence furnished by the inscriptions of Aśoka. They are engraved on rocks, pillars of stone or the walls of caves in the then main scripts of the country, Brahmi and Kharoṣṭhī, and distributed over a wide area throughout the length and breadth of the country from the Himalayas in the north to Siddhapura, Yeṣāgudī and Rajulamandagiri (roughly a little to the south of the Tungabhadra) in the south and from Girnar in the Kathiawar in the west to Dhauli and Jaugadha in the east. A study of the palaeography of these records indicates the following characteristics.

i. The majority of the letters in these inscriptions have different forms, which must have developed under varying conditions in different regions, and periods by different peoples. For instance, the letter A vowel alone has more than ten forms (Bühler).

ii. At least two main varieties of scripts, northern and southern are noticed, though other regional varieties are also traceable.

iii. Again it is seen that each letter has two forms, the monumental (generally angular and carved with due attention being paid to its aesthetic aspect) and the cursive (with a tendency to the formation of curves as in ordinary writing). This would be possible only when the letters had been in use for a long time to enable them to be easily recognised and identified.

iv. Some letters show advanced forms indicating that they were changing in their basic forms in the course of their evolution.

Bühler says: "The existence of so many local varieties, and of so very numerous cursive forms proves in any case that writing had a long history in Aśoka’s time and that the alphabet was then in a state of transition." Several centuries should have elapsed for the development of the several varieties of scripts to be used in the inscriptions of the period of Aśoka. Aśoka himself says that he was engraving his edict on stone so that it may last long." This implies that writing was then made on perishable materials also. Further the Mauryan Emperor prescribed a number of religious texts for daily use and recital by monks and laity alike. These works, it is certain, were not engraved on stone but written on common materials such as leaves, barks or paper which were all frail and perishable. The use of such perishable material also explains why specimens of earlier writing are not found in the country. The few specimens so far recovered are only either on stone or metal which will not easily perish. Further it is the practice to discard old manuscripts after they are copied afresh for future generation. By this process even the script would be changed, only the one prevailing at the time of copying being used.

The system of education that obtained in ancient India laid emphasis on learning direct from the teachers by mouth personally, thus memorising the text. The Vedas had to be pronounced correctly and it was believed that incorrect pronunciation would kill the Yajamān. This could be achieved only by oral learning direct from a teacher qualified for the same. Even in secular literature memorising of the texts was considered necessary. These do not, however, mean that written texts were not used at all, as will be evident from the view of Bhāspati referred to earlier.

Botthling in his English introduction to the edition of the Manavakalpa Sūtra prepared by Goldstucker says that in his opinion, though writing was not used for the propagation of literature (which was done orally) it was employed at

68. *Bhābru Edict*.
the time of composing new works. The mention in the \textit{Mahabharata} that Ganesa wrote the text to the dictation of the author, Vyasa as he went on composing is quite in conformity with the above. Roth was strongly of the opinion that the art of writing must have been known very early in India for works like the \textit{Pratisakhyas} of the Vedas could not be composed without its help. Bühler himself says: "there is nothing to bar the conjecture, repeatedly put forward that even during the Vedic period manuscripts were used as auxiliaries both in oral instruction and on other occasions. An argument in favour of this conjecture, it is now possible to adduce the indisputable fact that the Brahmi alphabet has been formed by phonologists or grammarians and for scientific use".

\textit{\textsuperscript{70}} p.69.

\textit{\textsuperscript{71}} Quoted by Olah, \textit{Pratynalpimél}, p. 15.

\textit{\textsuperscript{72}} \textit{Ind. Ant.}, XXXIII. App. p. 4.
B. ANTIQUITY OF WRITING IN SOUTH INDIA

It has been noticed above that the Jaina works, the Samavazyangasutta and the Pannavanatasutta mention that eighteen varieties of scripts were prevalent in the country in early times. The Buddhist work Lalitavistara refers to sixty-four scripts as having been in use in the country in the days of the Buddha. Those found in the Jaina list are in Prakrit while those found in the Buddhist work are in Sanskrit.

1. The eighteen scripts are:
   1. Bambhi (Brahmi)
   2. Yavanani or Yavanapaliya (Greek script)
   3. Dosapuriya (Dosapurisa)
   4. Kharotthi (Kharoshti)
   5. Pukkharasariya
   6. Bhogavaiya
   7. Pabraiya (Paharaiya)
   8. Uya-umtarikkiya (Uymitra Kariya)
   9. Akkharapattiya (Akkharapumpliya)
   10. Tevaniya (Vepaiya)
   11. Gi (ni) nhaiya (or phipattiya)
       Amkalivi (Amkalikkha)
   13. Gapitalivi (Ganiyalivi)
   14. Gamdhavallivi
   15. Adamsaliyi (Ayasaliyi)
   16. Mahesari (Mahassari)
   17. Dimili (Dravidian or Tamil)
   18. Polimdi (Paulindi, belonging to the Pulindas).

2. The sixty-four scripts are:
   1. Brahmi
   2. Kharoshti
   3. Puskarasari
   4. Angalipi
   5. Vaangalipi
   6. Magadhaliipi
   7. Mangalyalipi
   8. Mausalyalipi
   9. Angujyalipi
   10. Sakarilipi
   11. Brahmaavalliliipi
   12. Dravidalipi
   13. Kannarilipi
   14. Dakgilipi
   15. Ugralipi
   16. Samkhyalipi
   17. Anulomalipi
   18. Urhva-dhanurliipi
   19. Daradalipi
   20. Khasyalipi
   21. Cimalipi
   22. Haralipi
Many of the names contained in the lists are identical. Of the several scripts mentioned in them the following four seems to be important and historically true:

1. Brähmi or Bambhi  
2. Kharoṣṭhi or Kharotthi  
3. Dravidi or Dāmili  
4. Yavanāniya or Yavaṇāliya.

In addition to the above, the name of another Puṣkara-sāri or Puṇkharasāriya is interesting. Pāṇini's grammar, Apastambha's Dharmasūtras and some other works mention Puṣkarasādi or Pauṣkarasādi as one of the many ancient teachers of the Dharmasūtras and Vyakarna. It is possible to infer from this that Puṣkarasādi was the alphabet newly invented or an existing one modified by Puṣkarasādi, who was the founder of the school or by a member of the school founded by him.¹

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3. There is also a work called Puṣkaram (i.e., Puṣkaram) in Tamil verse dealing with certain tantric or yogic practices and signifying mystic values to some of the letters of the alphabet. Very likely the system might have been one dealing with the mystic values of the alphabet.
Of the four scripts mentioned above, Yavanānīya is evidently the script of the Yavanas or Greeks and identical with Yavanānī mentioned by Pāṇini and explained as such by his commentator Patañjali. Khaṇḍā century A.D. after which it disappeared completely. Brāhmī is the name of the script which was prevalent practically throughout India including the region where the Khaṇḍā was used simultaneously and running from left to right. All the modern scripts of India are derivatives of this script by evolution. The inscriptions of Aśoka are the best examples of this variety.

The remaining one, the Dravidī or Damili script should, as suggested by its very nomenclature, be the script used for writing the early Dravidian language. The existing Tamil script as well as the one that has disappeared, the Vaṭṭeluttu, used for writing the Tamil language in the inscriptions are themselves derivatives of the Brāhmī script. No specimens of any other independent script which can be shown as having been used for writing the Tamil language once upon a time and since disappeared have yet been recovered. Dr. Bühler thinks that the variety of the Brāhmī script incised on the relic caskets recovered from Bhaṭṭiprolu in the Krishna District in the Andhra Pradesh showing peculiarities not met with anywhere else represents the Dravidī type. Before examining this claim and the special features exhibited by this type, it is necessary to know what the Tamil sources themselves say about the art of writing.

Tamil is a very old language claiming great antiquity. Even during the earliest known period of the history of South India we find that it was a highly developed language with its grammar fully worked to the minutest detail. But unfortunately the earliest extant literature is not much, though there are indications to show that there was a vast literature, stray references to which are found in later works. The extant works are principally some anthologies of

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4. 1.49. It is explained by Kātyāyana as Yavanālipyam. Patañjali says: Yavanālipyamati vaktavyam Yavanānī tīpiḥ.
poems by different authors. It is not clear whether these poems were stray pieces or parts of bigger works, the names and nature of which are unknown. There are also the twin epics, the *Silappadikaram* and the *Manimēkalai* and also the celebrated *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. Scholars are not agreed about the age of these works, some holding that these works collectively known as the Sangam works are assignable to the first few centuries of the Christian era, a few dating them even earlier in the pre-Christian era, and some others being inclined to push the limit to a later period, i.e., the fifth or sixth century A.D. All of them recognise that there are certain poems, as in the collection of the *Purāṇāṇuṟu*, which prove that the extant Sangam works clearly bear evidence of the impact of Sanskrit literature and also of the culture associated with it, i.e., the Vedic and Aryan culture.

The early literary works in Tamil contain references to the art of writing in South India. The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* opens with the couplet:

\[
\text{agaramudaleluttellam adi} \\
\text{bhagavan mudarre yulagu}
\]

“"All the letters (of the alphabet) begin from the letter a (agaram); the world begins from the Lord, the first creator, Ādi (Bhagavan)."

Another couplet compares the two, the letters and the numerals (writing and arithmetic), to the two eyes of a man.

\[
\text{eṇnenbu ēnai yeluttenbu ivvirandum} \\
\text{kāṇṇenbu vālum uyirkku.}
\]

5. 1. 1.

6. In the *Silappadikāram* it is mentioned that the articles of merchandise imported at the port of Kaverippumāṭiṟam were marked with *Kannēṟuttu*:

\[
\text{irupadimāyiraṅ kāṇṇeṟuttup pāḻuttana} \\
\text{kaṟipuṅai sakaṭamum. (XXVI. 135.36.)}
\]

In another place royal scribes are called *Kannēṟuttalar*:

\[
\text{kāṇṇeṟuttalar kavai vendai} \\
\text{māṇṇudai maṭṭangalam maṭṭavarkkaḷiṟṟingu. (XXVII. 170.71.)}
\]

M. Raghava Ayyangar explains *Kannēṟuttu* as visual writing and suggests that it was some form of picture writing (*Arāicciotogui*, pp. 140.41.) More probably it means only superscription. The Agumpadauraikkār refers that the *Kannēṟuttalar* were the *Tirumuga. meḻduweṟ", those who superscribed addresses on letters. It may also
The Tolkāppiyam is the earliest of the extant Tamil grammatical works. According to tradition it was composed by Tolkāppiyar, one of the disciples of Agattiyar, who is considered to be the same as Agastya of the North Indian tradition and associated with the spread of Aryan culture in the south and the spread of Indian culture in foreign lands, particularly in South-East Asia. Agastya is said to have learnt the Tamil language from God Śiva himself and taught it to twelve of his disciples of whom Tolkāppiyar was one, the other eleven being Atan-kōṭṭāsān, Turalingan, Sempātcei, Vaiyāpikan, Vaiyāpiyan, Panampāranār, Kalāramban, Avinalan, Kakkaippādiniyan, Nanrattan and Vamanan. Of them Panampāranār has written the pāyiram or the introductory stanza (preface) to the Tolkāppiyam. It is said therein that the Tolkāppiyam was written by Tolkāppiyaṇār after a careful study of the earlier treatises on Tamil grammar on the model of Aindram (Aindiram nirainī) dealing with the Tamil language current both in literature and usage in the Tamil country extending from Tirupati in the north to Cape Comorin in the south, and that it was first read in the court of a Pāṇḍya king, for recognition in the immediate presence of the grammarian Atan-kōṭṭāsān.

be noted that though Kānneḻuttu may be strained to be taken to be visual writing, even alphabetic writing also may be taken to be visual writing.

The Iivakacināmapi, admittedly a late work, refers to a letter written in the Karanteḻuttu (X.1667). This has been taken by some to mean some sort of secret writing or gūḍhalekha. But from the gloss supplied by Naccinārkkīriyar it does not appear to be a separate kind of letter or alphabetic system, not even a secret code or cipher system. Naccinārkkīriyar says:

eḻuttai korantu eḻwina... ... ... ... ...
aweluttindālam pixar varilādapadi eḻudinar.

8. Naccinārkkīriyar, says that the king was Nilantarutiruvig Pāṇḍya (Tolkāppiyam, Naccinārkkīriyar Eḻuttadikāram Payira urai, p. 9.)
He was variously known as Vaḍimbalambaniṅga Pāṇḍya, Neḍiyōg, Pāṇḍyan māktiti etc. (See T. V. S. Pandarattar, Pāṇḍiyar Varalāka, p. 5.)

9. Mayilaināṭar one of the commentators on the Naṅgūli says that Avinasiyăr, evidently another of the twelve disciples of Agastya, wrote a treatise on Tamil grammar and that it was commented upon by Raja paviṭṭira Pallavaradaiyar. But neither the treatise nor the commentary is available now. The names of the co-disciples are known to us only from stray references found in the works of others.
The Tolkāppiyam is a compact and methodical treatise. Apart from the statement by Paṇampāraṅar in the payiram that the author had studied the earlier treatises (mundunul kanđu), there are also internal evidences in several places in the work itself indicating the existence of previous works on the subject. Some of the sūtras have close parallels (which may be taken even as translations from one or the other) in the (Vedic) Pratiśakhya, the Nirukta of Yāska, the Śīka and the Aṣṭadhyayi of Pāṇini or those of his predecessors in Sanskrit. Similarly there are strong differences also. It is said that when the Aṣṭadhyayi gained popularity, it ousted all the eight treatises on Sanskrit grammar. Paṇampāraṅar says that Tolkāppiyar was well versed in Aindram (Aindiram nirainda Tolkāppiyam). It is considered that the Aindra was one of the eight schools of Sanskrit grammar, ousted by Pāṇini. But curiously enough, Pāṇini, who mentions several previous authors, nowhere mentions Indra as one of them. The only reference which connects Indra with Sanskrit grammar is found in Patañjali’s Mahabhasya where it is said that he studied Sanskrit grammar word by word under Bhāṣpati for one thousand celestial years and was not able to complete it. There is striking correspondence between the Katantra and the Tolkāppiyam in respect of arrangement of topics and use of technical terms such as vibhakti (vērrumai), durgā (neḍil), hrasva (kuril) etc. From this Dr. Burnell infers that the Tolkāppiyam follows the Katantra and the Pratiśakhya. But it must be noted that the Katantra grammar is associated with Sarvavarman, the minister of the Śatavahana king mentioned in the Bṛhat-kalha and said to belong to the first century after Christ. If really Tolkāppiyar had followed the Katantra school in his grammar, certainly Paṇampāraṅar would have indicated that as Katantram nirainda and not as Aindiram nirainda.

The absence of any reference associating Indra with any grammatical work has led some scholars to doubt the correctness

of the statement. But in Tamil there are some clear indications of such association. Senāvarar in his commentary on Sūtra 75 of the Solladikāram of the Tolkappiyam quotes the following:

ēliyin muraiya telirmuka vēṟṟumai
vēṟṟa vilamban peyaratu viḻaramen
rōdiya pulavana muliyoru vagaiyal
intira netṭan vēṟṟumai yeṟṟaṇaṁ.

This is also quoted by Śankara Namaśśivāya Pulavar in his commentary on the Naṟṟul. According to this there was also another scholar who had stated that there were only seven cases, taking the vocative vilivēṟṟumai case as only a variant of the nominative case (peyar alladu mudal vēṟṟumai), but that Indra had taken that as the eighth case. All the extant grammars in Tamil, including the Tolkappiyam, speak only of eight cases. In Sanskrit, Paṇini mentions only seven cases, not treating the vocative case as a separate one. M. Raghava Ayyangar thinks that the scholar mentioned in the above quotation and who recognised only seven cases should be taken to be Paṇini.\(^\text{13}\)

The above statement is ascribed to Agastya. But the language and the reference to the vocative case as the eighth case, even though Tolkāppiyar mentions it as vilivēṟṟumai, do not indicate such an early date. Anyway the reference to Indra as the author of a grammar is interesting.\(^\text{14}\)

It is generally said that the Tolkappiyam is followed by the Sangam works, with regard to grammatical usages. But we find therein many usages which are not sanctioned by the rules contained in the Tolkappiyam and even prohibited. We also find a large number of usages sanctioned by the Tolkappiyam fallen out of use and some even viewed with disfavour. There are a few words which were current during the days of the Tolkappiyam but subsequently fell out of use. Among them were, for instance, mūḍu and kaḍama which meant the female of the sheep or goat.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Arāčocit tōguś, p. 84.

\(^{14}\) Mudal vēṟṟumai and eḻam vēṟṟumai are considered by Dr. P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri as late terms. (See his History of Grammatical Theories, p. 109.)

\(^{15}\) Mūḍu kaḍamaiyum yādaḷapēga (Tolk. Poruṣadikāram, Sūtra, 619).
We also find some usages in the Tolkappiyam, which even in the days of its author, were becoming rare and which, though not proper, should be taken as correct on account of their long usage, eg., an kutirai (male horse) being called sēval.16

These would indicate that some time, obviously a few centuries, must have elapsed between the period of the Tolkappiyam and of the Sangam works. According to tradition the Tolkappiyam was written during the period of the second Sangam (ṇāicaiccangam), while the majority, if not the entire body of the works known as the Sangam works, belong to the third (kaṇaicaiccangam). Considering the scholastic orthodoxy and conservatism of the scholars one may not be far wrong if the period of the Tolkappiyam is fixed somewhere about the second half of the first millennium B.C. if not earlier.

The grammatical works do not generally make any reference to written forms of the alphabet. The same is the case with the Tamil grammatical works which simply state that all letters are of the age-old forms (of distant past).17 But curiously enough the Tolkappiyam, the earliest Tamil grammar, refers incidentally to the written forms of certain letters. Among them a few deserve mention.

The addition of dots: Tolkappiyar says that all consonants have dots added to them. (meyyin iyaṟkai pūḷiyōtu nilaiyai) .18 In fact he refers to the consonants in some places merely by the appellation of pūḷi or dot (eg.), ya ra la vennumpuḷi: the consonants y r and l; la ra la la vennumpuḷi: the consonants ta ra la and la.19 Again he states that e and o have dots added to them (ekara okarat tiyaṟkaiyum appē): The nature of e and o are the same.20 This follows the sūtra relating to the dots for consonants mentioned above. Thus the nature referred to in this sūtra is the addition of a dot mentioned in the previous sūtra.

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17. Nāṇūl, Eḻuttadikaram, Uruvam, 98.
19. Sūtras, 29, 23 etc.
20. Sūtra, 16.
Tolkāppiyar also says that the further shortened $m$ has a dot within (the body of its form): *makarak-kurukkam.*

He further says that the quantity of $m$ is shortened to quarter of a *mātra* (time taken for one wink of the eyes or one snap of the fingers) when it follows some consonants. And in another *sūtra* he says $uttpurupuli$ *yuruvāgumme,* that the symbol of $m$ is with a dot within. It follows from this that the pure consonant $m$ which is half a *mātra* has already a dot, and to distinguish the shortened $m$ from the consonant, another dot is added and placed within the form, as there is already one dot by the side. This *sūtra* incidentally conveys the idea that the dots were regularly placed outside the symbols as is generally found in inscriptions.

According to the *Tolkāppiyam* the Tamil alphabet consists of thirty primary sounds (twelve vowels and eighteen consonants) and three secondary ones. This is mentioned in the first *sūtra.* The secondary ones are explained in the next *sūtra.* These are *kurriyalukaram,* further shortened $u$ *kurriyalikaram* further shortened $i$ and *aylam.* Tolkāppiyar uses the term *muppar puli,* in this connection.

Tolkāppiyar again says that the symbols of all consonants without dots represent the vowel consonants with the inherent $a$ and that the symbols for the vowel consonants in respect of other vowels (i.e., the vowels other than $a$) are different (having additional symbols).

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22. *Sūtras, 7 and 13.*

23. *Sūtra, 14.*

24. Naccinarkkiniyar says that the internal dot is placed not inside *makarakkurukkam* but *makaram,* viz. $mi$ (९) would be written as (९). But it seems that Naccinarkkiniyar is wrong for the context in which the *sūtra* *uttpurupuli* *yuruvāgum me* occurs shows that the author means only *makarakkurukkam* and not *makaram.*

25. In the second *sūtra* of *nūmārappu-stuttadikāram* (Tolkāppiyam) *muppar puli* refers only to the *ayasa* which is written in the form of three dots. Further *puli* refers only to *meṣyagutta.* Evidently *kuriyalukaram* and *ayla* are not *meṣyagutta,* (Sūtra, 2).

26. See M. Raghava Ayyangar’s article on ‘Tolkāppiyarśram pulle ejuttukkaṭam’ in his *Ārāccittadigall.*
It may now be examined how far the grammatical rules laid down in the Tolkappiyam were followed in actual writing in the Tamil country in the early centuries of the Christian era. The script, language and grammar followed with regard to Tamil and Prakṛt in the period give us some idea about it.

It has been seen earlier that the Buddhist and Jaina literatures mention the names of several scripts prevalent in the country in early days and that the Dravidi or Damila is one of them. Bühler thinks that it “is partly an independent variety of the Brāhmī which recently has become known through the relic vessels from the stupā at Bhaṭṭiprolu in the Krishna District.” 27 The same scholar while editing the inscriptions incised on these relic caskets points out that “the characters which mostly resemble those of Asoka’s inscriptions” show also “peculiarities met with nowhere else.” 28 Among them particular mention has been made of the notation of the medial and final vowels, which according to him show two remarkable peculiarities:

a) “The short a is invariably marked by the horizontal stroke to the right of the consonant which denotes long æ in the Mauryan alphabet except when an anusvāra follows. The latter limitation is probably due to the circumstance that the anusvāra was considered equal to am in which form it is invariably given in the native lists of mātrikas or alphabets.

b) The long æ is usually marked by a horizontal stroke and a vertical hanging down from its end.”

He also adds that “in other respects the notation of the medial vowels mainly agrees with that used in Aśoka’s inscriptions.” 29

In the Aśokan alphabet, or as a matter of fact in all the scripts in the north, the symbol of a consonant (without the addition of any other sign for the medial vowel) has the short a inherent; and a horizontal stroke to the right at the

29. Ibid., p. 324.
top is added to denote ə long. Thus in Aśokan Brāhmi + is to be read as ka with the short inherent a and ꝏ as ka with the medial vowel ə long. But in the alphabet of the Bhaṭṭiprolu records the latter form represents the ka with the inherent short a (and not the long one as elsewhere); and another symbol, a vertical stroke hanging at the right end ꝏ is added to indicate the letter ə long. Thus ka is written as ꝏ. So in the scheme of writing found in these records, a consonant without the addition of any symbol of a medial vowel would denote a pure or vowel-less consonant without the inherent ə short, though no such usage is found there, while in the Aśokan and other alphabets such a pure consonant is not usually written as a separate character, but as a joint character (dvandvakṣara) with the succeeding vowelled consonant. Bühler thinks that “the device is not doubt of later origin and has been invented in order to avoid the necessity for ligatures.”

The alphabet used in the Brāhmi inscriptions discovered in the Tamil country follows the above scheme of Bhaṭṭiprolu records. This becomes clear from the way in which symbols for the medial vowel ə long are added to the consonants in these records. First of all is to be noted that no ligature or dvandvakṣara is found in these Brāhmi inscriptions. And in the addition of symbols for the medial vowel of ə long two methods have been adopted. While a majority of them have the usual horizontal stroke added to the right at the top, there are also a few having two such symbols added. These are found as two parallel horizontal strokes to the right at the top, instead of a horizontal and a vertical one as at Bhaṭṭiprolu.

It will thus be evident that even in these records the same principle followed in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscriptions has been

30. No pure or vowelless consonant has been found to occur in the Bhaṭṭiprolu records and this is probably due to the peculiar nature of the Prākṛt languages used in these records.
32. Evidently the scheme adopted in the Brāhmi inscriptions in the Tamil country is an improvement of the method adopted in the Bhaṭṭiprolu records and as such these records have to be assigned to a period later than those of Bhaṭṭiprolu.
adopted. And accordingly, the consonants without the addition of any symbol should be considered as a pure or vowel-less consonant (without the inherent short a): consonants with the addition of a single symbol for the medial vowel denote those with the a short or the inherent a and those with the addition of two such symbols denote vowelled consonants with the a long.

This method of notation of the medial vowels a short and a long is peculiar to the Brāhmī script of South India and not found elsewhere. As surmised by Bühler this was obviously to avoid ligatures in the expression of pure consonants.

As said earlier, the Tolkappiyam specifically lays down that the written form of the character of a pure or vowel-less consonant will have a dot added to it. This principle is followed in writing Tamil even to this day. Thus the pure consonant k without the inherent a should, according to the Tolkappiyam, be written in the Brāhmī of those days as k. But the dot above the letter which has not been unknown to the Brāhmī script will denote entirely a different value in the Asokan alphabet. The dot represents the anusvāra and therefore this symbol has to be read as kam.

one other peculiarity is also seen occasionally in the Brāhmī inscriptions found in the Tamil country. Sometimes vowelled consonants are not written as one single letter, i.e., consonants with the addition of symbols indicative of medial vowels, but as two separate letters with the pure consonants and the basic vowel forms side by side. Thus to denote yu we have the symbol for ya first and the vowel u as || instead of the usual form | with the medial u added to the bottom. Similarly we find nu written as _ with the two symbols of na and u. ta written as \ with the symbols of ta and a etc. These instances strengthen the principle enunciated above that in this scheme the consonant letter without the addition of any vowel sign is to be vowel-less consonant.

33. See ante p. 117.
34. In epigraphy this is observed only on rare occasions especially in the records of the earlier period. The puli or virāma is generally conspicuous by its absence, more so in the inscriptions of later periods.

P—16
There are however exceptions. A careful examination of the Brāhmi inscriptions of the Tamil country would show that this scheme is not adopted in all the inscriptions. Those found at Māmāndūr, Pugalūr, Kunnakkūdi etc. do not adopt this notation. The values of a, both long and short, to be assigned in these records are those found normally in other records and not the specialised ones mentioned above. Most probably this is due to the fact that chronologically they were later.

We may, before leaving the subject, also note another interesting reference to the varieties of scripts found in the grammatical works in Tamil.

The old commentary (circa 11th century A.D.) on the Yapparunkalam, a work on Tamil prosody, while commenting on the last sūtra of the work, dealing with what a scholar should be familiar with, mentions various kinds of writing and quotes the following sūtras.

uruvē ưnarve oliyē  tanımaiyaṇa
iruvagai yelūllum vīrāṇḍagum.

The ēlūtutu (letters or writing) is divided into four kinds, uru, ưnarvu, oli and  tanımai, the first two forming one group and the second another.

kaṇappattā vuvuvamellam
maṇakkaṭṭum vagaimai naḍī
vaṭivilōviyān kaiṇaiṇpōla
ēḻudappāduvatu uruvēluṭṭagum.

This sūtra describes the first variety uruvēluṭṭu "That which is written like the handiwork of a faultless artist (painter) by way of portraying in a grand manner the pictures of all objects just as seen is uruvēluṭṭu."

The definition of the second ưnarveluṭṭu is given as follows:

koṇḍa-v-ōr kuriyāl koṇḍa-v-ataṇai
undėn r-ûnaruvivaṇ uûnarveluṭṭu agum.

"That which signifies the existence of an object conceived (by drawing) a sign or symbol conventionalised to denote the same is ưnarveluṭṭu. This stage may be taken to be the same as the second stage in the evolution of writing mentioned above (hieroglyphic)."
The third sūtra is:

śai-p-ṇadu, puśilinēzal-pōla-c
ceriph-ṭuln-avadu oḷi-y-ēluttaguṃ.

That which is audible to the ear like the musical note of a sweet singing bird is oḷi ēluttu.

It may be seen from the above that it signifies the sound sign or syllabic symbol.

The last is:

mutar kāraṇamum tunai-kāraṇamum
tunai-kāraṇattōdu toḍāriya-v-unarvum
avārōtu phunarndas-v-agaltelu vāljiyūn
migārro-p-piran-śaiṇṭpadu tāṇmai y ēluttu.

That sound which is born in the neck (throat) by the air produced (or raised) from the inside (of the body in the effort) combined with the primary cause, the secondary cause and the sense perception associated with the secondary cause is the tāṇmai ēluttu.

The definition of the first uruvēlutta clearly indicates that the author intended to convey the ideas of picture writing by that sūtra, while the definition of the second indicates the next stage in the evolution of writing, namely the heiroglyphs.

The third, oḷi ēluttu indicates the sound sign or syllabic symbol and the last tāṇmai ēluttu gives the definition one usually finds in the grammars for the alphabetic characters. 35

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35. The Tamil nighaṇṭu Divākaram assigned to the eighth century A.D., contains the following:

peyar ēluttu muḍiṇēlutta vaḍiṅ-ēluttul-tāṇmai
ēluttēna vēluttē peyar iyambinare.

The Pingalandai, another nighaṇṭu has the following:

vaḍiṅu peyar tāṇmai muḍiṇu naṅkeṭuttu.

Thus both the nighaṇṭus contain reference to all the varieties namely vaḍiṅu (form) peyar (name) tāṇmai (nature or quality) and muḍiṇu (finite). The only difference among them is with regard to the order in which they are mentioned. But they differ from the four varieties quoted by the commentator of the Pāpparunkalam.

A later work, the commentary of Marilainatar on the Tamil grammar Naṅkiṭ quotes another set of sūtras which are also
It is not known where from the commentator extracted these *sūtras* for quotation, as also who their author was.

quoted in the *pāyiram* (introduction) by Ārumuga Nāvalar, the Editor of the *Ilakkanak-kottu* of Śvaminātha Deśikar (17th century). The names of the four divisions as given in the introduction are *vādīvū, pēyar, tānmai* and *mūdiu*. The *sūtras* mentioning them are as follows:

\[ \text{vādīvū, pēyar, tānmai, mūdiu} \]

The *ējullu* or writing sought after by Nāvalar, the masters of the tongue (i.e. poets or scholars), are of four kinds, *vādīvū, pēyar, tānmai* and *(ūn)* *mūdiu*.

The definition of the word *vādīvejullu* is given as

\[ \text{kṣipulaḥ illaḥ, kaṇavulaik-kaṇṭum} \\
\text{sattakam pūla-śeppullaḥ o-digam} \\
\text{uṭholkar-śidum urubām vādīvejullu} \]

The *vādīvejullu* is the form (picture) given to bring to mind the sound audible (to the ear) like the form given to denote the god not perceptible to the eye.

The next variety, *pēyar*, is defined as

\[ \text{vādīvū mūdaḥ mummaiyaḥ valaṅgam ējullir} \\
\text{pūla pala pakutikē-dupeyar pēyarē.} \]

The *pēyar-ējullu* is the name given to the several component parts of the three varieties of letters (of writing) current in three-fold (varieties) beginning with *vādīvū*.

The third variety is the *tānmai y-ējullu* which is defined as:

\[ \text{tāna mūyaḥ takkaluca-cuippulaḥ} \\
\text{āya-voli tānmai-y-ējullu-agumē} \]

The *tānmai-y-ējullu* is the sound which is audible to the ear and produced with the place (śāna) and effort. The last one, the *unmūdīvejullu* is defined as:

\[ \text{urumuddaḥ mummaiyaḥ onuxiya-u-iyalpai} \\
\text{marum-u-ūnā tumivad-unmūdīvejullu.} \]

The *(ūn)mūdīvejullu* is that which is decided in mind in combination of the nature united with the three fold (qualities) beginning with the form *(vādīvū)*.

The above *sūtras* are obviously expository of the four kinds of *ējullu* mentioned in the *nīgasūnga* referred to above. But the author of the *Ilakkanak-kottu* merely says *akarranuviṣa-nadda uruwejullu, oti-ējullu, uṣir ējullu tānmai ējullu enkē poruḥ kūrīṇiṇi uvamēyatēṇi maṃraḍaḥ olippala kākāppadum*. He does not approve of the four fold classification on the ground that Tolkappiyar does not mention it, i.e., *ējullukaṭkupilakkāram Tolkappiyareṇüdhāvāvāvai appamappad a gandirundum pēyar avārykku maṃrapa ḫūrīṅar*
But one thing seems clear. Their author was quite familiar with the different stages in the evolution of the art of writing, and very likely they were in use in some form or other. The classical literature in Sanskrit and various other languages so far made available do not contain any reference to them.  

In that way the stray references to pre-historic and pictographic writings in ancient Tamil literature is unique and interesting.  

36. It may be mentioned in this connection that the Sanskrit grammars describe four phases of speech sound, pari, pasyaniti, madhyama and vaikhari. "Pari being the phase of the Sabda-brahman undifferentiated primordial sound manifested at mulaadhara or sacred plexus, pasyaniti being that phase which is manifested at the navel and which is cognisable to yogins, madhyama being that phase which is manifested at the heart and vaikhari being that phase which is manifested at the vocal organs as the articulated sound." (See P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, History of Grammatical Theories, p. IV.)  

But it must be noted here that these are not the ones described in the sikhas quoted above.  

37. [ma ka pu u, a, piṣi, kumari, kaṇṭi, pinau, muṣuvaṇa enkina siṣaṭuttam] a ka ca ta la pa ya mutaliya vāya vairuttam, a ca la va ra la yā yū mutaliya īrāci esuttam, kārttikai mutaliya nājeuttam topa mutaliya nāluvai esuttam, cāti mutaliya taṃmae esuttam, uccālaṇa mutaliya ukkira esuttam, cītirakāraṇam mutaliya mūlira esuttam, pākiyal mutaliya nāluvai esuttam, pūteś mutaliya nāṛkai esuttam, īrāra mutaliya oli esuttam, mākā maṇaiyam mutaliya śanketa esuttam, kalat mutaliya śanketa esuttam, pārppan vaijakkāhīya paśiy mūnjeuttam, anūrt āthakatātanavam kaṭṭurai esuttam, vacchira mutaliya vājuveuttam, manyu mālavaṇiyar, kaṭṭappanna ellā esuttam vallát vāy kēka.  

The āya-esuttu like ā, ka, ca, ta, la, pa, and ya; the iṇās-ṣuṣuttu like a, ca, la, va, ra, ni, and ya; the nāl-eṣuuttu like the kārttikai; the four kinds of letters like tōpam, the taṃmae letters like the cāti; the ugra letters like the uccālaṇam, the muttiya-esuuttu like the cītira kāraṇam, the four kinds of letters like the pākiyal; the nāṛkai letters like the pūteś; the oli-ṣuṣuttu like the īrāra; the śanketa letters like the mākā-maṇaiyam; the śanketa letters like the kalat; thirteen letters of the pārppanvalakku (Brāhmaṇa usage); and so forth (commencing with this) the kaṭṭurai-ṣuṣuttu the vaiju-ṣuṣuttu like the vajciram (vajra) and all the other letters denoted in so many ways, learn (or should be learnt) through the (mouths) of experts.  

A careful comparison of this with the lists of the varieties of scripts mentioned in the Jaina and Buddhist works will show
that many names are identical and both of them are complimentary to one another. The Tamil commentary mentions fifteen varieties, the first thirteen being placed in one group, and the last two in another group. Of the last two, katturai eļulu would represent the writing of the figurative language or pithy, sententious expression, while the other would evidently denote the vaḷralipi, some kind of pictograph.

It is not easy to explain what the first thirteen varieties of scripts were. The first among them, the aya eļulu which is probably connected with the word ayaṁ, meaning income, may be taken to represent the symbols or signs marked on merchandise on which tolls or customs duties were leviable. Irasi eļulu may probably be connected with the sciences of astronomy and astrology and taken as the symbols or signs of the zodiacal houses, while the naḷan eļulu may be considered to be the symbols or signs of the stars of the stellar constellation. The word iḷaṁ is obviously the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word śiṅha and denotes the additional sound in using the Śāmaṇeda. Thus these would indicate the marks used to regulate the chanting, like uḍāta, anuḍāta, uṣurita and pracaya. The word taṅmai which means quality was probably a symbol by which various things were classified according to their nature. The ugra eļulu evidently represents some mystic symbol or sign used in Tantric literature. Multiraṇa eļulu would probably denote the artistic expression of the hands (mudras) in dancing and music. The pāliyai seems to have been the name of the language of the mahouts in training elephants. Putiţe probably stood for a symbol that denoted a script of the celestials. Dhaţu was apparently some kind of secret writing which could be made visible with the help of some minerals. Saṅketa meant some form of cryptic writing or code writing. The thirteen letters of the Brāhmaṇa usage evidently refer to the thirteen letters (surd consonants) of the Sanskrit grammar and referred to as aṭhoga.

(For a fuller discussion see T. N. Subramanyan, South Indian Temple Inscriptions, Vol. III, pt. ii, Appendix, The Tamil Palaeography, pp. 1580—86, which I have largely followed in this Section).

It will appear that these varieties of letters denote special symbols or signs used to indicate technical terms, special sounds used in arts and sciences and not included in the Tamil alphabet. Even now many symbols are used in Tamil writing. The existence of similar ones in earlier days in the Tamil country is seen clearly from inscriptions.

It may also be pointed out in this connection that the word eļulu in Tamil not only denotes the script, letter and writing but also painting. In fact there are a number of references in classical Tamil literature where the word eļulu has been used to indicate painting. (See, for instance, Paripādal, 19, 53; Kuruntogai, 89). It will be seen from this that the ancient Tamils treated painting as a variety or form of writing.
CHAPTER IV

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS

The existence of lithic records incised in the Brāhmī script in North India and the Deccan has been known for a very long time. Even as early as the fourteenth century A.D. when Firoz Shah Tughlak shifted the Aśokan pillars from Topra and Meerut to Delhi, it is said, he invited a number of Sanskrit scholars to read the writings on the pillars, but they were not able to decipher their script. It is also said that Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, was inquisitive about the writings on the pillars and that his attempts to have them read met with no better result. And it was only a little over a hundred years ago that the mystery of the script of the Aśokan edicts was unravelled by western scholars like Ch. Lassen and James Princep in the fourth decade of the last century, and that forms the foundation of our knowledge of the ancient art of writing, language and history of India. But the provenance of early records written in the Brāhmī script in the Tamil country was not known till the beginning of the present century when the first Brāhmī inscription was found in 1903 in the cavern at Kilavaljavu in the Madurai District and copied by the officers of the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India. But the importance of the record was not realised immediately. Three years later, in 1906, L. A. Commiade, a Civil Servant in the District of Tirunelveli, reported the discovery of another cavern with Brāhmī inscriptions at Marupattalai. This prompted the making of vigorous attempts to trace similar caverns with Brāhmī inscriptions in other parts of the Tamil country; and it bore ample fruit. The majority of the short Brāhmī inscriptions under study in this book were discovered in the southern districts of the Tamil country in the next five or six years by the officers of the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India.

The discovery of these records created for them a difficult problem, namely their decipherment and interpretation. The script in which these label inscriptions were incised had been known to them for long, and as such there was not much difficulty for them in transcribing a major portion of them in the modern script. There were, however, a few symbols peculiar to these records neither seen in the Brāhmī inscriptions found in
other parts of the country, nor included in the standard script with its value definitely settled. Copies of the records were also sent to scholars outside for study and interpretation. H. Krishna Sastri even thought it worth drawing public attention to these records by publishing photographic copies of the ink-impressions of the inscriptions in the Annual Reports on South Indian Epigraphy for the years 1912, 1915 and 1918. In order to stimulate fresh inquiry and study in this direction he induced Rama Prasad Chandra, then Honorary Secretary of the Varendra Research Society “to take up these Brāhmī documents of South India for study and make an attempt, however slight it may be, to interpret them.”

These attempts did not produce any result worth mentioning. “Careful readings directly from stone and from estampages were prepared on the spot of almost all such records as had been collected by the department.” Finally Krishna Sastri himself gave his own readings of these short epigraphs in a paper which he contributed to the first All-India Oriental Conference held at Poona in 1919, which he concluded with the request that these inscriptions might be taken up for earnest study and interpretation. In his readings of these inscriptions he assigned to the new symbols found in them, the values of the signs very nearly resembling them in the standard Brāhmī or their variations employed in inscriptions in other parts of the country, drawing at the same time pointed attention to them either in the body of his paper or in foot-notes. He also induced K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, another senior member of his Department to take up the study of these inscriptions.

The long experience of K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar in the Department, particularly in handling the Tamil records as also their preliminary study by H. Krishna Sastri, were of immense help to him in his examination of these records. According to him these inscriptions followed the Brāhmī script employed in the records recovered from Bhaṭṭiprolu. With commendable ingenuity he was able, apparently after great labour, to fix the values of the new symbols which had baffled scholars previously as those of the letters peculiar to the Tamil language and he was the first scholar to recognise that the inscriptions were written in the Tamil language. He read and interpreted the records as written
in the Tamil language and presented to the Third All-India Oriental Conference held at Madras in 1924 a paper embodying the results of his study.

But his conclusions were not fully endorsed by scholars. Some were not agreeable to or rather convinced of the possibility of these records being written in the Tamil language. Their main objection appeared to be that while all the inscriptions of the period written in the Brāhmī script and found in other parts of the country were composed in the Prākṛt language, how could it be possible for these records alone to be composed in Tamil? Further the Tamil language employed for writing these records as read, explained and interpreted, did not have much resemblance to standard diction and could be understood only with some emendations. The idea that these inscriptions also must have been written only in the Prākṛt language was strong in the minds of some scholars. C. Narayana Rao took their language definitely as Prākṛt, restored them in Sanskrit and endeavoured to explain them in a paper presented to the Tenth All-India Oriental Conference held at Tirupati in 1940 and wrote a paper on the same in the first number of the now defunct New Indian Antiquary.¹

However, it must be noted here that the reading, restoration in Sanskrit and interpretation of the inscriptions by Narayana Rao are not at all convincing, seem to be far fetched and in very many cases are not applicable to the area, period and the people who were supposed to be the authors of these inscriptions, or for whom they were intended. Further, he had taken only the tentative readings of H. Krishna Sastri as the basis, and treated them as final for his interpretation, ignoring the hesitancy and warnings of the original reader of the inscriptions. Further the Prākṛt language envisaged by him as used in these epigraphs is quite different from the inscriptive Prākṛt of the period and not found anywhere else.

In spite of the distinct contribution made by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar to a study of these enigmatic inscriptions it should be said that his interpretation of them is defective for two reasons:

¹. pp. 362-76.

P—17
(i) Even though he has traced in these records the influence of the scheme of writing adopted in the inscriptions of Bhaṭṭiprolu he has not used that system in fixing the values of individual letters. It is true that this system does not help in reading all the records. Some of them could be satisfactorily read only if the standard values of the Brāhmi symbols are applied to them and are unintelligible if the values of the Bhaṭṭiprolu or Drāviḍi type are assigned, while the others will become clear only when they are read in the Drāviḍi style. This will necessarily show that these records are of two different types and probably belong to two different periods chronologically. However, when he studied these records it was generally held, mainly on palaeographical evidence, comparing the forms occurring in these with those in other Brāhmi inscriptions, particularly from North India, that they belonged to the third century B.C., the period of Aśoka. The inscribed potsherds recovered from Arikamēḍu near Pondicherry in the course of the excavations at the place in 1945 and from Uraiḻur in Tiruchirapalli in the course of the excavations at the place in 1965 both assigned to the first century A.D. or thereabouts from reliable evidence were obtained only longafter. Similarly the inscriptions in the Brāhmi script, found at Pugalīḻur in the Tiruchirapalli District and the Mamaṇḍur in the North Arcot District and closely resembling those of the inscribed potsherds from Arikamēḍu were also found and copied only later. These discoveries would clearly show that all the Brāhmi inscriptions recovered in the Tamil country so far do not belong to the same period and that there were differences among them with regard to their chronology. Further it is possible to envisage an evolution in the method of writing in the Brāhmi script in the Tamil country, some of the records adopting the Drāviḍi style and some others not. If such a hypothesis is accepted, the reading and interpretation of the records would have become much easier and more acceptable.

(ii) K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar has not also pressed into service the knowledge derived from a study of the classical Tamil literature. Any study of the epigraphical material should utilise and not ignore the early literature in the language in which such epigraphical materials are found. Some of the expressions found in the Brāhmi records in the Tamil country are better understood and explained by reference to classical Tamil literature.
At the stage it is necessary to know in detail the special features of the script used in the inscriptions found at Bhaṭṭiprolu or the Drāviḍi style of the southern Brahmi as it is otherwise called and their bearings on the Brahmi inscriptions in the Tamil country.

In this connection two important question may be considered viz., the language of these records and the object and nature of their contents.

(i) All these records are found in natural caverns high up on the summit or the slopes of hills made suitable for human occupation. They are incised either on the beds in the caverns or on the brows of the overhanging boulders or walls, and are mostly of single or double lines consisting of a few letters. The situation and length of these records would indicate that they are either dedicatory or donative. We have the records of Daśaratha, the grandson and successor of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka, dedicating the caverns excavated in the Nāgārjunī hill in Bihar to the monks of the Ājivika sect for use during rainy season. Similar records are found also in other parts of India. On the northern border of the Tamil country there is a record at Malakonḍa in the Nellore District in Andhra Pradesh. In Ceylon are found a large number of similar records, some of which have been edited in the volumes of the Epigraphia Zeylanica. All these Ceylonese records mention the dedication or donation of the cave to the monks of religious sects for their use during the rainy season and for doing meditation or penance. The Brahmi inscriptions of the Tamil country also should likewise be taken as mentioning the dedication of these caverns and beds for the use of religious monks and their penance.

In addition to the followers of the Vedic religion, followers of other religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, as also the Ājivikas had come to the south even before the beginning of the Christian era and had settled in South India obviously with substantial following among the masses. One of the Tēvaram hymns derides

3. This is given as an appendix at the end.
for instance the heretics of those days as \textit{purṛ-ēṛ-ṛ-umāṅkuvār}, those who (suffer pain and) wither away, climbing the natural crevices (high up on the hill). This would imply that those who lived in these caverns were not the followers of the Vedic religion but those who professed the heretical faiths, Buddhism, Jainism or the Ājīvika one.

It is not clearly known if these labels are dedicatory or donative in nature, whether they mention the donor or the donee. It is usual that in such inscriptions or labels, the names of the persons who donated or dedicated the object are given. The names of the donees, whether those of individuals or religious sects or even of some gods, are at times given, but not always. In such cases the names of the donees alone would not have been given, without those of the donors. It is the common tendency among donors to take some pride and satisfaction in making such offerings and inscribing their names to show to the world that they were responsible for them. In most of these Brāhmi labels there are found some personal names. These names may be those of either the donors or the donees, very likely those of the former, as many of them contain only single names. Therefore it may not be wrong if it is presumed that these labels mostly contain the names of the donors or persons responsible for the donation of the caves, sometimes accompanied by the names of the persons to whom they were made. But it is to be understood that the donors of these caverns to the teachers of one religious faith need not invariably be the followers of that faith. It is possible that the followers of one faith for could have made donation to the followers of another faith for some reason or other. That would show the popularity of the teachers and the esteem in which they were held by the people. In Ceylon, for instance, there are instances of Brahmans making such donations to the Buddhist organisation.

(ii) The language of these records has been a puzzle to scholars from the very beginning. The official view of the Archaeological Survey of India has been summed up in a way in the following words.

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**Fig. 12.** Palaeographical chart of selected letters from early South Indian inscriptions.
"The exact nature of the language of these inscriptions is still open to question, but they appear to be in early Tamil (as distinguished from the Tamil found in early Tamil literature, as well as modern Tamil) with a sprinkling of Prākrit."

It is true that all the early inscriptions recovered in the country and written in the Brāhmī script are in the Prākrit language. So far nearly a thousand such inscriptions, not taking into account the edicts of Aśoka, have been ably and critically edited by competent scholars in various publications. But the South Indian Brāhmī inscriptions have baffled the attempts of scholars in Prākrit with regard to their interpretation. To determine the language of these enigmatic inscriptions one has to seek a clue from the records themselves. An analysis of the Brāhmī script used in writing these records would reveal the following peculiarities:

(i) Of the hard consonants |ka, ca, ta, ta and pa, only the first or primary letters are found in the Tamil alphabet, i.e., the varga prāhmas of the Sanskrit alphabet are found in them.

(ii) The soft varieties of the third letters i.e., the varga tritiyas of the above consonants in the Sanskrit are absent.

(iii) Of the aspirated varieties, i.e., the second and the fourth letters of these consonants, the letters tha is found used sparingly in two are three places while dha may also be taken as having been used in one place (Aṇīṭapāṭṭi A). The others are not met with.

(iv) Sa and sa are also not found. Only sa is occasionally met with.

7. Ancient India, No. 2. July 1946, p. 109. Even now it is thought that the Brāhmī records have not been satisfactorily interpreted and there is nothing definite about their language. For instance, P.B. Desai writes as follows:

"These records have still remained an unsolved riddle, though they were discovered over four decades ago. The contributory factors for this state of affairs are these: peculiar forms of the Brāhmī alphabet, crude and archaic nature of the language which may be an undeveloped variety of Prākrit (?), difficulty in the grouping of syllables and words, prepossession in regard to their Buddhist origin to the exclusion of their Jaina relationship."

(Jainism in South India and some Jain Epigraphs, p. 29, n. 3).
(v) No ligatures or conjunct consonants are met with.

(iv) Among the vowels only \( au \) is not found; similarly the vowels \( e \) and \( l \) of the Sanskrit alphabet as also the \( anusvāra \) \( aṁ \) and the \( visarga \) \( oh \) are absent.

So far as the vowels \( e \) and \( o \) are concerned only one symbol without any distinction for the short and the long, is found, used both among the vowels and combined consonants. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says: "In the case of the combined consonants the occurrence of short \( e \) and short \( o \) deserves special attention, the two being the special characteristics of the Dravidian alphabets." But it has not been possible to make out from the available photographs this difference between the short and long in the vowels \( e \) and \( o \), both as primary vowels and as combined with consonants. It is also to be noted in this connection that this peculiarity is found in the Tamil inscriptions in all periods.

While explaining the Dravīḍi style of writing found in the records at Bhaṭṭiprolu reference has been made to the \( sūtra \) in the \textit{Tolkāppiyam}, which says that in writing, the pure consonants will have a dot added to it. The next \( sūtra \) mentions that "\( e \) and \( o \) are also of the same nature." An additional dot to denote the short in the vowels \( e \) and \( o \), both primary as well as secondary, is found in Tamil epigraphy on very rare occasions and is more conspicuous by its absence.

The above analysis would show that the language employed in these records had only the \textit{varga prathamas} with no sonants or other aspirated forms. This peculiarity together with the absence of \( śa, sa, ha \) etc., would indicate that the alphabets of the language closely followed the pattern of the classical Dravidian form or Tamil.

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8. The previous scholars who have studied these inscriptions have not recognised the primary vowel \( aś \) in them, and so included the vowel \( aś \) as one of the letters absent in them. But this is found in the inscription at Anaimalai. (See the word \( aśa \)).


10. \textit{Tolkāppiam, Eluttadikaram, Sūtra 16}, see ante p. 117.

It has been pointed out earlier that some new symbols are also found used in these records. The very fact that these symbols are not found in the Asokan inscriptions would clearly indicate that they represented alien sounds not found in the standard Brahmi script and thus would belong to a language quite different from that of the Asokan records. The vowels assigned to these symbols would certainly be an important factor in deciding the language of these inscriptions as also in their interpretation. Such new symbols found in these records are:

(a) \( \cdot \)  
(b) \( \mathcal{C} \)  
(c) \( \mathcal{D} \)  
(d) \( \mathcal{U} \)  
(e) \( \mathcal{U} \)  
(f) \( \mathcal{M} \)

(a) The first symbol \( \cdot \) which occurs ten times in the Brahmi inscriptions of the Tamil country under consideration is not seen in the Brahmi inscriptions of North India prior to the commencement of the Christian era. However, it is found in the Kṣatrapa, Śātavāhana and Gupta inscriptions and given the value of long ː. This symbol is found in the Tamil inscriptions of the eighth century and given the same value. It also occurs in the Brahmi inscriptions of Ceylon and has been read as short ː. In the Brahmi inscriptions of the Tamil country also the symbol is read as short ː as in the Brahmi inscriptions from Ceylon.

In the inscriptions of Asoka the vowel ː short is indicated by three dots arranged in the form of a triangle (\( \cdot \cdot \cdot \)) and long ː by four dots arranged in the form of a square (\( \cdot \cdot \cdot \cdot \)). The latter form found in the Brahmi records of the Tamil country are taken as short ː by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar. This difference in the evaluation of the vowels ː short and long proposed by him is interesting. But this position did not last long, for the original position was restored later. It is however difficult to explain why this difference was short-lived. The formation of the symbol of a vertical line with two dots, one on either side, indicating the vowel ː long may be explained as follows. From the śūtra in the Tolkāppiyam it becomes clear that in the Tamil country, the addition of a dot to any letter or symbol indicated the diminution of the sound, reducing the mātra or the sound length to one half of its original length.13 According to the above rule, the letter written in the shape of four dots instead of denoting the long ː
would indicate the form of the short vowel ī. Very likely it was considered necessary to make some change in the form of long ī. This was effected by joining the two diagonally opposite dots, thus making them a line, leaving the other two dots, one on either side.

(b) The second symbol ṁ which looks like the ‘inverted ṇ’ occurs frequently, more than sixty times, in our inscriptions. It occurs sparingly in the inscriptions at Bhaṭṭiprolu and has been assigned by Bühler the value of ṇa long. Though its sound value may not be quite different from that of the same symbol in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscriptions, it has to be given a different value here. This is evident from the fact that in a particular inscription, viz. the Śittanīnavāgal record the ṁ symbol is used along with the ordinary Aṅkān ṇa form. As such this symbol has to be taken to be different from the ordinary ṇa, but denoting the same sound value. The peculiar alphabet ṇa of the Tamil language answers to the description. Hence it has to be taken to represent the letter ṇ which occurs generally at the end of some words. It some cases the symbol has to be treated as a basic consonant found at the end of some words and indicating third person masculine singular, and in others as ṇa as in the case of other letters.

(c) The third symbol ḍ, however, occurs rarely in the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country eg. Tirupparankunram and Ariṭṭāpatī. Krishna Sastri writes about it as follows: “The formation of this letter is very peculiar. Its similarity with Khalsī Aṅkān Jā given in Bühler’s Tafel II—15, 2 is very slight. One can venture to say that it is somewhat like the modern Tamil ḍa.” 13 K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar also is of the same view. 14 Their suggestion is acceptable. In fact no other value can be assigned to the letter.

(d) The fourth symbol which also occurs many times in these records resembles very much the Brāhmī letter ṇa with a slight difference, namely the addition of a hook line stroke to the right arm. It is suggested that it may be taken to represent the lingual ṇa, a distinct feature of the Dravidian languages. Though

the symbol ṯa occurs in the Bhaṭṭiprōlū script also, its form is slightly different there.\(^{15}\)

(c) The fifth symbol is a very curious one. It looks very much like a badly shaped ṭu. It occurs once in each of the Āṇaimalai and Sittāṇavaśal records, twice in one of the Ariṭṭapattī records and four times in another (record I) from the same place. Krishna Sastri says about them: "These are letters the formation of which is not found elsewhere. I have suggested the readings ḍu and ḍai on the strength of the remarks on the letter ḍu made by Dr. Bührler, on the palaeography of the Bhaṭṭiprōlū inscriptions.\(^{16}\) Still the letters ḍu and ḍai are not certain. They may be conjunct consonants as well."\(^{17}\) K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes it to be ḍa and says: "the only letter that is allied in sound to ṭa which has no equivalent in Sanskrit and for which a new symbol had to be devised in the Aśokan code is the Dravidian ḍa. The difficulty of pronunciation of this letter and its kinship with ṭa, ḍa and sometimes with ṭa by which letters it is often substituted not only in speech forms but in allied languages will be evident to any observer. (Cf. Tamil kunṟu, Telugu konda; Tamil naṟṟu, Telugu naṇṭu... ...This likeness in sound has to account for the devised form given to it in our records... ... ... Even in the Vaṭṭeluttu script, its formation is such as to be mistaken for ṭa (with but slight difference). What proves conclusively the correctness of the value suggested here is the occurrence of it after ṯ in the Āṇaimalai record in the word kunṟa."\(^{18}\) Thus the symbol may be taken to denote ḍa.

(f) This symbol is found in the Brāhmī inscriptions at Pugaljiyur in the Tiruchirapalli District. Comparatively it is later in date than that found in the Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli Districts, and very much resembles the letter found on the potsherds unearthed in the excavations at Arikamēdu near Pondicherry. The symbol found here looks very much like the letter ṯa of the Vaṭṭeluttu script. Along side of this symbol we find also in the inscriptions at the place the symbol ᐧ indicating the value of cerebral ṯa as also a few

16. Ibid., pp. 323 ff.
17. Proceedings of the First All-India Oriental Conference, p. 324, n. 3.

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others. But the form is slightly different. The upper part of the symbol instead of being a vertical line with a curve to the right at the top, lies low very much like a semicircle, with the right end of the curve reaching the level of the base. There are also one or two other forms which may be considered as intermediaries between them. Only the value of cerebral ṇa suits the places where they occur. Evidently these forms represent the different stages in the evolution of the form of the letter. All of them have been assigned the value of ṇa.”

It is to be noted in this connection that the shape of the hard ṇa employed in the Brāhmī inscriptions at the place, though retaining the same form has undergone some change. The upper part of it in the records of the Pāṇḍya country appears like the Brāhmī ṇa, while the lower part consists of two vertical lines like the symbol of the medial u added to it, so that it may look different from ṇu. But here the upper part has been reduced to a mere hook, the lower part appearing like a mere ṇa. But still a comparison of these forms will show that the latter form was evolved out of the former.

The Brāhmī of these inscriptions, even though following very closely the Brāhmī of the Aśokan records, yet contains a few peculiarities and deviations from the latter. These may be stated briefly as follows:

Vowels:

In the Aśokan inscriptions, the letter a appeared like an ‘inverted k’ with the two arms joined. Even that form is found in these records also in a majority of cases. The letter has both the arms as two separate angular lines diverging in opposite directions, above and below ṇa. The symbol for the vowel ai has not been recognised in these inscriptions by the scholars who have studied them till now. The letter ai is written in the northern inscriptions as a modified form of e i e, a horizontal line to the left at the top of a triangle with its apex above and base at the bottom, ߡ or in other words, with the addition of the symbol for medial vowel e, to the symbol of the primary vowel e. This

is in conformity with the concept of the Sanskrit grammarians deriving the \textit{vṛddhi} vowel \textit{ai} from the \textit{guna} vowel \textit{e}. But the form of \textit{ai} found in these records (in the one at Aḷagarmalai, in the combination of \textit{Aśā}) is in the shape of a trident, similar to that of the \textit{Vaṭṭeleluttu} script of later days; and this same form is found in the \textit{Allūru} inscription\textsuperscript{20} though standing a little bit to the left. The word \textit{Aśā} is found also in the \textit{Hāṭhigumpha} inscription of the Kalinga king Kāravela.\textsuperscript{21} Here it may be taken to signify a Pāṇḍya, as the later members of the family claim descent from \textit{Candra} (Moon) through his son \textit{Budha} (Mercury) and the latter’s son \textit{Iśa}. This trident form in the south appears to be connected with the form of the semi-vowel \textit{ya}.

The necessity for designing and introducing a new form for a letter which already possessed another form in the Brāhmi script would clearly show that the existing form was not suitable for indicating the intended letter while writing in the southern part of the country; evidently the existing form indicated in the south another letter or it was very similar to the form of another letter so as to cause confusion. Such a letter could have been the vowel \textit{e} either long or short, depending on the value assigned to the letter having the triangular shape. Considering that in the case of the vowels \textit{a} and \textit{u}, the standard shape indicated the short sound, the long one being indicated by the addition of a symbol, we may consider that the case of \textit{e} also was similar. Very likely the triangular shape might have originally denoted at least in the south the short \textit{e}, the long vowel \textit{ē} being written by the addition of another symbol. Perhaps this explains the need for designing a new form for the vowel \textit{ai}.

Consonants:

In the Aśokan inscriptions the letter \textit{ma} is written as a circle with two perpendicular arms above. But in these records it is written in the form of a broad cylindrical tube opening up with a cross-bar in the middle. However, the shape of the letter found in the Māmaṇḍūr inscription is somewhat different. It

\textsuperscript{20} A.R.S. I. E., 331 of 1924; Rep., p. 97 and plate facing it.
\textsuperscript{21} Ep. Ind., Vol. XX, pp. 80 and 86.
appears more angular there and the two perpendicular lines at the top appear instead as two slanting lines converging towards a point below and joining together. This form looks very much nearer the shape of the letter in the Grantha script as prevalent in the Tamil country in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D.

The letter या, though written with three arms, is found in the northern Brāhmī with the middle arm too long like an anchor. Though similar forms are found in these records also, they are very rare. The most common shape is to have all the three arms of equal length.

Medial vowels:

It has been noticed earlier that in northern Brāhmī the long अ is indicated by the addition of a horizontal stroke at the right to the top of the character, and that in Drāviḍi the letter denoted the consonant with the inherent अ short, instead of अ long. Sometimes we find here also two such strokes to indicate अ long.

Medial ऐ is generally denoted by the addition of two straight lines, one horizontal and the other vertical, opening upwards at the top of the right; sometimes the angle is found smoothened, thus forming a sort of curve.

Medial ए is formed by a line at the top of the character projecting both to the left and to the right; sometimes it is found as two separate strokes, one on the right and the other on the left.

One other peculiarity in writing vowelled consonants is observed in these inscriptions. Instead of adding the symbol for the medial vowel to the consonant, sometimes the consonant and the vowel are written side by side. For instance, in the inscription at Kongarpuliyankālam, for denoting the letter न्य in the word Pakagūr, the name of a village, the symbols for the consonant न and the vowel य (both of which make the word न्य) are written side by side. Similarly in the record at Sittanavāsal the letter ता in the word aliṣnam is represented by two symbols, the consonant त and the vowel ा written side by side. Likewise in the inscription at Karungāḷakkudi the letter य in the word
Eṭhuyur is denoted by two symbols, the consonant ṣa and the vowel a, written side by side. These examples will show clearly that in these Brāhmi records, the consonant letter without the addition of any vowel sign is to be treated as a vowelless or pure basic consonant (without the inherent a).

It is very likely that this method of writing was adopted not out of ignorance of the rules of the formation of the voweled consonants, but in consonance with some definite principles followed in writing in those days. The expression ṣa which comes at the end of words like Pakaṇur and Eṭhuyur clearly indicates them as the names of villages. They were probably named after persons like Pakaṇ and Eṭhuy. Hence the above form was adopted to indicate that such villages were named after certain persons.

In other respects, the Brāhmi of these records follows the standard pattern of the Aśokan inscriptions.

The new symbols invented both for new sounds as also for a few letters for which symbols already existed in north Indian Brāhmi, but which were found unsuitable for use in the records, would clearly indicate that the language employed in them was not Prakṛt, but Tamil, the language of the people of the region where these inscriptions are found.

Language:

This view is further strengthened by a study of the words employed in these records.

The real import of a few of the words that frequently occur in these records but have not been properly realised and interpreted so far by the scholars who have studied them may be considered first.

Among them are alaṇa, anatai and aritana:

Alaṇa or alaṇa, anatai and anilana, aritana or aritina are some of the words which are found largely used in these inscriptions. Judging from the context in which they are found, it would appear that they are the proper names of persons. Then the letter ṣa at the end of the words alaṇa and arilana have
to be treated as the basic consonant ṇ indicating the masculine singular suffix.

Of the first word the most common form is atāṇa and occasionally atāṇa, without the medial ṇ long for the letter ṭa. Adopting the system followed in the case of records at Bhaṭṭiprāḷu described earlier, the consonant letters without the addition of any symbol represent the basic or pure (vowelless) consonants, those with the symbol of ṇ long represent the consonant with the inherent a short; and to denote ṇ long two such symbols are added. According to this principle the word has to be read as atāṇ. This looks very similar to the word Āṭan found in early classical Tamil literature as part of personal names, Cf. the Cēra ruler Cēral Āṭan. The initial a is shortened instead of being lengthened.

The second word written as anatai has to be read as antai; and this in turn looks very similar to the word antai (with the initial long vowel shortened) occurring likewise in classical Tamil literature. Cf. the poet Picir Āntaiyar, whose compositions are included in the collection Ahananḱuru.

The third word has to be read as Ārīlaṇ or Ārīlaṇ. This may be compared with the word Ārīlaṇ of the name of the Tamil grammarian Aiyans-Arīlaṇ-ar, author of the treatise Purapporuḷ-vinṟamalai.

It may be taken that these three names are really Āṭan, Āntai and Ārīlaṇ, with the initial vowel shortened in all of them.

Ārīlaṇ and Ārīlaṇ are the Tamil forms of the names Hārita and Hāriti respectively. The name Hāritiputra is mentioned in many of the Prākṛt inscriptions of the early centuries of the Christian era found in Karnātaka and western India. The kings of the Kadamba dynasty who ruled from Vanavasi (Banavase) claim to be Hāritiputras of the Manavayagotra. The word Arīlan or Arīlan of these inscriptions should be taken as indicating that the bearer of that name was a member of the Hārita family.

There is a specific Sūtra in the Tolkappiyam, which states that the Tamil word antai is formed by the combination of two words atan and tantai and that another word pūntai is formed
similarly by the combination of the words Pūtaṇ (Bhūtaṇ) and tantaī. This is the middle of three sūtras explaining the rules of sandhi when the word tantaī having the meaning of father is added to the proper names of persons. This is a general rule. The commentators point out the following as examples: Cattāṇ + tantaī = Cattantaī; Kīrṇaṇ + tantaī = Kīrantantaī; Kārṇaṇ + tantaī = Kārantantaī. The suffix aṇ of the standing personal name and the initial consonant t (retaining the medial vowel a) of the joining word tantaī are dropped. The sūtra after that under discussion gives the special rule to be observed when the standing personal name happens to be Ātāṇ and Pūtaṇ. In addition to the changes mentioned in the preceding sūtra, the final consonant and the initial vowel of the standing word and the coming word respectively (remaining after effecting the above change) are also dropped. Thus in the word Ātāṇ the suffix aṇ is dropped as per the preceding sūtra, and of the remaining at, the final consonant t also is now dropped, thus leaving only the initial vowel a. Similarly in the word tantaī, the initial consonant t is dropped according to the preceding sūtra and of the remaining antai the initial vowel is now dropped, thus leaving only the final antai. Thus combining with a, the residue of the standing word, it becomes antai. The third sūtra gives the exemptions, i.e., the cases wherein the above rules will not apply. Accordingly if such proper names are preceded by adjectives, there is no change (i.e., no dropping of letters). If the standing word is Perūṇcattāṇ, i.e., Cattāṇ with the adjective Perum, signifying great, there will be no dropping of letters when tantaī is added to it. Thus Perūṇcattāṇ + tantaī will be Perūṇcattāṇ-tantaī.  

22. Iyarpeyar mugyam tantaī mugarvarpaṇ mutarpana meychēya vakara nilaṇā meyojita tapaṇa mawiyapaṇ peyaro.  
Ātānaṇaṇ Pūtaṇaṇ kūriaṇa viyaloṭu peyaro zakaṇaṇ tuwaṇa kejunaṇ.  
Girappoṭu varuvai viyakka yakuṇ.  
(Tolkāppiyam, Eḻuthadikāram, Ed. by P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri.)

There are also some more words in Tamil which have been formed likewise in combination with tantaī e.g. entai made up of et and tantaī meaning 'my father', nuntai, made up of nun and tantaī meaning 'your father', etc. These two words relate to the first and second persons of the grammatical formula. Similar combinations with the words tay (mother) and tampi (younger
The above sātras would thus show that in those early days, many names in which the word tantai forms an integral part were in common use among the people of the Tamil country. That such was the position will become evident from the following names borne by some of the poets and others as gleaned from the Śāngam classics; Cattantai, Kīrantaï, Āntai, Pūntai, Kṛrṇantai, Piṭantai, Eiṅantai, Vaṭukantai etc. On the analogy of entai (made up of two words en and tantai) meaning 'my father' and nuntaï (made up of two words nun and tantai) meaning 'your father’ the above words are taken as indicating the fathers respectively of Cattān, Kīrān, Ātān, Pūtān, Kṛrṇān, Piṭān, Eiṅān and Vaṭukān. Thus the word Antai has been taken as indicating the father of Ātān.

But it would appear rather strange that persons bearing these names, themselves great poets, instead of being known by their own personal names, should be known as the father of their sons about whom nothing is known. It is usual to indicate the name of a person as “so and so the son of so and so.” This practice also appears to have been in vogue in those days as will be evident from the names Madurasikkārkkāykārnamagaṇa Nakkavanār, Ollaiyur Kilarragaṇa Perūncattān, Kaṭṭīṛ Kilarragaṇa Kannavaś etc., occurring in the Śāngam classics. It might be possible to conceive of stray cases where the father of a famous son is referred to as “the father of a well-known son”. But the above cases do not appear to be stray ones. On the other hand these appear to be common as a class. Among the persons having the name Antai or Antaiyar we have Picir Āntaiyar, (authors of Naerīnaś 91) Oṭal Antaiyar (author of the hundred stanzas, 301-400 of Palai in

brother) also occur for the first and second persons; empi made up of en and tampi or ampi (my brother); numpi made up of nun and tampi or ampi (your younger brother); also ḍāy (my mother) made up of ed and ed; ḍūy (your mother) made of nun and ed.

yayum jñāyum yār akiyaro?
entaiyum nuntaiyum emmusaik kēli?
yānum niyum ēv—vaḷi akiyum;

Kuruntogai, 40.

Such combinations do not, however, occur for the third person. The words ḍāy and tampi are generally taken as signifying such relations with reference to the third person, thus obviating the necessity of using any special word for that. (tāy ḍāy and tāy tampi).
Ainkutunuru) Añcil Antaiyar (author of Kuruntokai 294 and Nargiñai 233) Cirkakuñt Antaiyar, (author of Kuruntokai 56, 57, 61, 133, 168, 222, 273, 300, and Nargiñai 16 etc. It is inconceivable that these poets were known as fathers of sons bearing the name of Añtan, who are otherwise unknown.

This difficulty appears to have been felt by some scholars even earlier. They have therefore tried to explain the construction e.g. of the word Añtan made up of the two words Añtan and tantai as referring to "a person who has Añtan as his father," that is referring to the son of Añtan. But rules of grammar do not admit of such a construction. It has therefore to be given up." Further it would have been much easier and more normal to refer to a person as 'the son of so and so' instead of in a round about way as 'the person having so and so as his father.'

The problem is further complicated by the mention of the names of the wives and sons of such persons. The incident relating to the lady referred to as Kirantañi manaiwi (the wife of Kirantañi) is significant. The term Kirantañi manaiwi would mean 'the wife of Kirantañi' i.e., the wife of the father of Kiran. This is a circuitous way of referring to a person. She could be easily referred to as the mother of Kiran.

The Tolkappiyam gives in continuation of the three sūtras mentioned above (codifying the changes that take place in the sandhi when the word tantai, meaning father, is added to certain proper or personal names) another sūtra detailing the changes when the word denoting son is introduced.

\[
\text{Appayar meyyolit tankeñu valiyu} \\
\text{Nirṟalnu murilte yammeñ cariyai} \\
\text{Makkam murailokuñ marunku nana.}
\]

(Tolkappiyam, Sūtra, 351.)

29. See Ch. 29. It is said that a person known as Kirantañi went on a pilgrimage leaving his wife at Madurai, with no one else to look after her, thinking that the protection given by the Pañdyaking was enough.
According to it in the expression Cattan makan korran, i.e., Korran son of Cattan, the word makan itself is not used (being only understood), while the suffix an of the standing word is dropped and its place taken by the increment am. Thus it becomes Cattan Korran. This is followed by another rule which gives the exceptions in certain cases whether the word in question denotes the father or the son.

\[
\text{tanum penna ko} \text{n} \text{u menu}
\text{ma murai yiyarpeyar tiripitanilave} \quad (352)
\]

According to this sūtra there is no dropping off if the words tan, en and kōn are either followed by the word tantai or have the word denoting son understood after them e.g., tan+tantai = tan-tantai; pēn+makan+Korran = pēn-Korran.

These would show that just as in the case of tantai or father, the word denoting a son was also largely used in the names of persons in those days.

The author of Tināi-moli-y-aimpatu, one of the eighteen minor classical poems, known by the collective name of Padinēn-kil-kanakkuy is known as Cattantaiyar-makanar kiran-korranar i.e., Kiran Korranar son of Cattantaiyar. The name of the poet Kiran Korranar, is to be interpreted as Korran son of Kiran and who at the same time was the son of Cattan, the son of Cattan i.e., the person who was the father of Cattan.

Cattantaiyar makanar Kiran Korranar
Kiran Korranar = Kiran makan Kirranar.

The full name will be:

Cattantaiya tantaiyin makanarana Kiran makan Korran.

Such an interpretation does not, however appear to be correct.

This very same combination with the substitution of the name Piṭantai instead of Cattantai occurs in one of the Brahmi labels now under discussion and found at Pugaliyūr. The actual reading in the inscription is.

Piṭantai makan Kiran Korran

Under the circumstances we have to find some other explanation for similar constructions as also the word makan.
There are some words in Tamil with the suffix makan added to them like anmakan, panimakan, perumakan etc. In all of them the suffix makan does not mean a son. In fact anmakan means anmai udaiyavan (one who is courageous or brave), and panimakan means paniseiyan (one who does service or work). Similar expressions are found in Sanskrit, such as Vanik putra meaning only a merchant (not a merchant's son).  

In all these cases the word makan and putra obviously indicated only a spiritual son and not a natural son. It is only by such an interpretation that we can explain the formation of the name Piṭantaimakan Kiran-Korrūn which indicates Kiran makan Korrūn i.e., Korrūn son or follower of Kiran son of Piṭantai. It is also to be noted in this connection that the names Sattan piṭan (Bhatara) Kiran (Kubera, etc.) are all holy ones.

Considering the above it would appear that the word tantai should have had some special significance or meaning in addition to its literal meaning, father. The term ‘father’ denotes five persons, the bodily or physical father, the religious preceptor, the teacher who gives education, king and one who gives food. There are different tests by which these five persons are distinguished. But the religious preceptor in addition to the bodily or physical father is always included in the list and occupies an honoured place. The Sanskrit word guru meaning a preceptor or teacher also refers to the bodily father. In the inscriptions of the Western Caḷukya king Vikramaditya I this word is used in that sense (svaguroḍhiyam: the royalty of his father).

Evidently the word tantai used in these compounds gives out some such meaning as a ‘spiritual father’; possibly it denoted a religious teacher in the same way as the word ‘Father’ is now applied to Roman Catholic Priests or an ācārya among the Hindus. Therefore the word antai (ataṁ + tantai) may be possibly taken as meaning ‘the Holy Father Ātān,’ instead of merely as ‘the father of Ātān.’

30. It may be mentioned in this connection that the purohit Brahmans of Gaya (Gayavalis) are called Gangesputras and the Vira Bulingas of the Telugu country (Viravalsājīyar of the Tamil country) are called Pārvatputras.
32. Vide the Tokai (Qsām) section of the Tamil nighanyas.
Then the word Āțaț which is frequently met with in these inscriptions should be taken as denoting a person of high religious merit respected and venerated by people. The word seems to be derived from the Sanskrit word āpta and the Tamil nīghantus give it as one of the synonyms of the arhat.

This word is also found largely used in the Tēvāram, when referring to the persons of the heterodox religious orders i.e., persons belonging to religious other than Saivism like the Buddhist, Jaina, Ājivika orders. This word is explained by modern commentators as a low people (kilnakkal)"a and as ignorant persons, fools (aṇivillālavar)"b

If really the word Āțaț meant only low people or ignorant fools, then would it have been borne as personal names, even by royal personages: of. Ĉeḻal Āțaț i.e., Āṭaṇ, the Ĉeḻa king? Further from the context where this word occurs in the Tēvāram hymns, it would appear that it should denote one of the many heterodox religious groups then prevalent in the country.

It has been pointed out above that the word is derived from āpta which is a synonym for arhat. The word arhat is found in use not only among the Jainas, but also among the Buddhists and the Ājivikas. Further, from the Tamil poem Nilakēṭi,"c it is learnt that the word āpta was used by the Ājivikas, to denote exclusively the founder of that religion (Makkhalī Gosāla), Markāli."d Even in a late Kannada inscription of the thirteenth century A.D. from Śravaṇa Belgola the word āpta is used, so as to suggest the Ājivikas."

It is therefore possible that the words Āṭaț and Āntai (Holy Father Āṭaṇ) are terms denoting the people of the Ājivika faith."

33a, Tiruvilaiyatalam Tēvāram, First Tirumurai; Ed. by Dharma- puram Adhinam, p. 97.
34. See vv. 670, 671, 683 etc. (A. Chakravarti's edn.). See A. L. Basham, History and Doctrines of the Ājivikas, pp. 79, 125, 244 and 276.
35. Basham thinks āptan to be 'a rather unusual title which may have had a specifically Ājivika connotation.' (op. cit., p. 79).
37. It is very likely that similar combinations Pūntai, Kirantai, and Sāttantai also mean respectively Holy Father Pūtna (Bhūta).
Paṭi is another word found thrice in these inscriptions, at Kālavaḷavu, Karungalakkuḍi and Ariṭṭappaṭṭi. This word has an additional symbol ṭ at its end in the record at Kālavaḷavu and thus the reading of the word is Paṭiṭ, while the record at Ariṭṭappaṭṭi has the letter ya at the end of the word, which therefore reads paṭiya. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the word in the record at the latter place as Paṭiy, with the expletive use of y at the end as in accord with the spoken dialect. The suffix y is commonly found in several Tamil inscriptions of the early period (up to the 10th century A.D.). But he thinks that the ṭ at the end of the word in the Kālavaḷavu inscription is the pronoun denoting ‘this.’ But this letter ṭ as indicating the pronoun is not found used either in Tamil literature or inscriptions. It is also very doubtful if it was ever used in that way in the other Dravidian languages in early times. Again its occurrence at the very end of the record also shows that the letter could not have been used in that sense, as it is quite against the Tamil or Dravidian syntax. Subrahmanya Ayyar himself is aware of it and so he adds, “if its use at the end of a sentence is objectionable and unlikely it may form part of paṭi.” He thinks that the word paṭi y is the Tamil word meaning an excavation in stone set apart for the residence of monks and that it is not unlikely that it is connected with the Prākrit word paṭiya as suggested by Krishna Sastri. He also quotes two extracts from the Tamil Nighantu in support of the meaning he has suggested.38

But the word for which the meaning ‘stone excavation’ has been suggested by him is paṭi with the palatal ṭ while the word in

Holy Father Kiran, and Holy Father Sʻattan, and that these names related to the various religious faiths then prevalent in the Tamil country. The Šilappadikāram mentions Paṭanga Sʻattan (Canto IX, 11. 12, 15).

(cf. also Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu Commemoration Volume, pp. 156-9).

38. These are paṭi tapatāṁ karaṇḍai paliyē munivar vāsam (Iṣappayyar 56) Pugaliṅ Kārpaṭi Karaṇḍai (Ibid 14).

There are different nighantu in Tamil and Subhramanya Ayyar has not mentioned the particular nighantu from which he has quoted. The quotations are from the fifth section of the Čagamani nighantu. The first means: ‘Paṭi, tapatam. karaṇḍai and pali denotes the abode of sages.’

The second means: ‘Karaṇḍai denotes a pali made of stone.’
these label inscriptions is páli with the lingual ḷ. The letter ḷ was not unknown then, as may be seen from the fact that the letter has been used in some other inscriptions. Thus it will be seen that the two words are different.

The actual form of the word as found in these labels is páli with the suffixes i and y which have only phonetic values and not any particular etymological value. In consonance with the general principle followed in the reading of the inscriptions, which are in the Dráviḍi script, the word is read or restored as palī. It must be mentioned, however, that there is no Tamil word either as páli or palī. Evidently it is the word palī with the double or second ḷ in the middle dropped. This feature is common in Prākṛt and also met with in Tamil literature frequently.

The word palī is generally used in Tamil epigraphy to denote a Jaina or Buddhist temple and palīc-candam to denote the land or village gifted evidently as tax-free, to such a temple or religious institution. The devotional literature of the Saivas and Vaiṣṇavas uses the word palī as referring to such a temple. Nānasambanda in his hymn on Aralivanallur refers to one section of heretics as 'those who appropriate small fish (or fish fit for cooking) taking their stand in the palī, near the (Back-water, salt-river). It is also used to denote in addition the hermitage or cell of a recluse of the Jaina or Buddhist religion. But etymologically

39. Kaṭi-y-arugu palī-y-idam: āga vaḷu mīn kavārvargal
   (III, 82-10 Tevāram).

Tirumangai Alvar likewise uses the word in his hymn.

(Periya Tirumoṭi, 2-105).

In all these places palī is taken to mean sanaṇa-palī.

40. cf. Mātavī Mātavar Paliyut atattatam
   (Mayumkalai, 18-8).

The Maduraik-kāṇji contains the following: Nilamanar vaiyat-
torutamag e yuvār milaiyulaga mivaṅgū raidu maṇa neįg
piṇaiyā vaṣṭuṇād adāgār periyār mē yisidā nūraiyūṇ
kuṟu kuyū ḱauṇa Vàndaper palĮiyum
   (11, 470-74).

Yirumpūdā āğa narumāṇ ṣekkaiyūṇ
Kuṟupala kui ip polivyana tōṟa
   (11, 487-88).

Kurumpal kuvir kuṟu kaḍāṇa
paruntiru tukakkum paṇa nallir
   (11, 501-2).

It is not known if the term anadgar palī in 1. 474 may be taken
to mean the dwelling place of Brahman ascetics. It is very
doubtful if Brahman ascetics repaired to caves for any religious
exercise.
the word means a bed, a sleeping place and also sleep; and it is generally in this sense that the word is used mostly in literature.\textsuperscript{41} Very likely the word originally indicated the bed or sleeping place used and later on came to denote the residence of such monks, which in course of time also included their places of worship erected in their compounds or very close to them.

It is also to be noted in this connection that the three words pāḷī, pāḷi and pāli or pālī are closely connected. A verse in the Periyapurāṇam, while describing the destruction of the Jainas at Madurai after their defeat in the religious disputation with the Śaiva saint Triśūlānasambandar in the presence of the Pāṇḍya king, says that “all the pāḷi where the Aṃāṇar were gathered and the pāḷi where the Arūgār (Arhat) resided in both the urban and suburban areas in the city were uprooted.”\textsuperscript{42} The word Aṃāṇar denotes the Jainas in general and the word Arūgār their God Arhat.\textsuperscript{43} So according to the Periyapurāṇam the word pāḷi would refer to the place where the Jainas gather, and pāḷī their temple. But pāḷi is used also in the same sense of a temple. The Nalayirādivya-prabandam refers to the Vaṇavar kōṅ pāḷi:\textsuperscript{44} and the commentary known as the Iḍu on the Tiruvāy成都市 mentions “that the elephant of the Aiyān pāḷi is not designed for the battle.”\textsuperscript{45} The Aiyān pāḷi mentioned here was the temple of Aiyānār or Sāṣṭa in front of which was placed a huge elephant in brick and mortar.\textsuperscript{46} The word pāḷi is also used in Tamil literature to mean a hermitage or abode of seers,\textsuperscript{47} and also as a

\textsuperscript{41} Cf. Kāḷa akhāḷ pāḷiyul voittārē Kūral 840 in the former sense and Kalittokai 121 in the latter sense.

\textsuperscript{42} Pāmiyin Māḷuraiyullār pūgalulār aṃāṇar sērum Pāḷiyum Arūgaṁ mēvuṁ pāḷiyum aṇa oḷam sēṟapparitē (Periyapurāṇam, Tiruṇānasambandar Purāṇam, 871).

\textsuperscript{43} The same work uses the word Arūgār denote the Jainas (Dantē), Adigal Purāṇam, 10, 18 etc.).

\textsuperscript{44} Vaṇavar kōṅ pāḷi—(Iyār 2-13)

\textsuperscript{45} Aiyān pāḷiyin Aiyā Pērkurittam engu (Iḍu, I-1.5).

\textsuperscript{46} The God Sāṣṭa is generally considered as a god in the Hindu pantheon. He is found in the Jain pantheon also. (See T. N. Ramachandran, Tirupparuttikkunaga and its Temples, (pp. 33 and 202).

\textsuperscript{47} Muṇivar vacam—pūtam tampǎr pāḷiḥ hōṇṇuṇavār pāḷi togram (Tōvaram, 186-5).
sleeping place. We thus find that both the words \textit{pali} and \textit{pāli} have been used in Tamil literature, and, convey the same idea or meaning. Very likely these two words denoted the institutions of different sects, the Jainas, the Ājivikas and the Buddhists.

The other word \textit{Pali} is usually understood to mean a language, a particular form of Prākṛt used in the Buddhist literature. But with regard to its origin opinion is divided among scholars. Childers in his \textit{Pali Dictionary} gives the following meaning for the word: "a series, row, line etc.", and for Pali-bhāṣa "the language of the Buddhist sacred texts." Macdonell gives it the meaning 'dyke.' Buddhaghoṣa uses the word to denote a boundary line. Thus according to their interpretation the word does not denote a language. But Walleser thinks it was a language and says that the term is derived from the word \textit{Paṭali} or \textit{Paṭali-grama} "where the Buddhist Bikksus assembled soon after the death of the Buddha and which for a long time was the centre of Buddhist life." He thinks that it was originally known as \textit{paṭali-bhāṣa} or the \textit{bhāṣa} or \textit{Paṭali} or \textit{Pataliputra} (or pura) and as a result of phonetic changes (1. shortening of the final vowel, 2. dropping of the intervocalic \textit{t} with contraction and 3. cerebralising of \textit{l}), the word became \textit{Pali-bhāṣa}. According to him Pali-bhāṣa was the language of Paṭaliputra. He also connects the words \textit{Pali} and \textit{Paḷi} and thinks that very likely the latter is an expression which comes straight from Ceylon.\textsuperscript{49}

It must be noted, however, that linguistically the suggestion of Wallser does not seem to be sound. It may be well asked how \textit{Pali} which was predominantly used in Western India became associated with a town in Magadha unless one maintains that \textit{Pali} was the name of the language in which was written the Buddhist primitive canon some of whose linguistic features did penetrate in the Pali canon." If \textit{Pali} is to be derived from Paṭali (putram), it must be really very old. But as pointed out by Childers, "the term Paḷi as a name (for the language of) the Buddhist scriptures was of late introduction, probably dating from the second or first century after Christ."

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Perumpali sānta vitattavai} (Div. Iyag - 1.80)

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Sprache und Heimat des pali Kanorns} No. 4, referred to Indian Historical Quarterly \textbf{Vol. IV} (1928), pp 773-5; also \textbf{Vol. VI.}, pp. 377-9.
Pisani attempts to derive the word Pali secondarily from the word \( \text{pali-bhāṣa} \). He considers the word \( \text{pali-bhāṣa} \) to be a \( \text{vṛddhi} \) derivation from \( \text{pari-bhāṣa} \), meaning teaching, rule, and definition. Thus \( \text{pari-bhāṣa} \) or its Prakritised form \( \text{Pali-bhāṣa} \) meant the language in which the rules of the faith were written (i.e.,) the language of the canon.\(^{50}\) It seems that the word \( \text{pali} \) was known as \( \text{pali} \) in Tamil. The commentary on the \( \text{Yapparanūkalakkarikai} \), a work on Tamil prosody mentions \( \text{Paliittayam} \) as a grammatical work on the Prākt.\(^{51}\) From this it becomes evident that the word Pali denoted a Prākt language even in the tenth century A.D. when the commentary appears to have been written. Is it possible that the early Buddhist literature got the name \( \text{pali} \) or \( \text{pali} \), because it was exclusively the language of the monks who resided in the \( \text{pali} \) ?

From a consideration of the above it may be concluded that the word \( \text{pali} \) originally meant a bed or sleeping place set apart for the monks, which in course of time came to designate their residence, and later still by extension it came to denote the hermitage of the monks and also the temple attached to it. The other word \( \text{pali} \) is also closely related to it, possibly on account of its derivation therefrom.\(^{52}\)

\( \text{Pali} \) (or \( \text{pali} \)) is not the only term used in these epigraphs to denote the cave or bed that was donated. Many other terms are found. Among them are \( \text{kavi} \) meaning a vault or enclave (Muttupaṭṭi) \( \text{poṇ} \) (Kongarpūjāṅkum), \( \text{Kal-kañ-caṇam} \) of stone (Maruṅṭaltaḷai). These are pure Tamil words or those formed according to the rules of Tamil grammar. The \( \text{aṭṭanam} \) (Sanskrit \( \text{adhiśṭhana} \) meaning a dwelling place or abode, is the word largely used in the labels recovered from Pugalīyur. The same is seen in the form \( \text{aṭṭanam} \). The exact significance of this word meaning a seat has been discussed at length by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar.\(^{53}\) The addition of the suffix \( \text{m} \) applied to

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50. Dr. S. K, Balvālkhar Felicitatiion Volume, pp. 189-191.
51. \( \text{Paliittiyameṇṇum pākata vilakkaṇānum—Kārikai payiram l, uro} \).
52. It is not known what connection the word \( \text{paliḥanāja} \) has with these terms.
53. See Journal of Indian History, Vol. xxxvii pp. 109-112 for a paper on \( \text{‘Pali, Pali and Pali’ by the author.} \)
words of Sanskrit origin would clearly demonstrate that it has been adopted to conform to the principles of Tamil grammar (to suit the genius of the Tamil language).

Some pure Tamil words are also found in the inscriptions, such as tantai (father) occurring in the Ariṭṭaṭāṭṭi record A, and makan (son) in the Uṇḍāṅkāl record.

The words with the suffix as indicating third person singular masculine in the Tamil language occur very frequently in these records. Kośipana, Kuṭumphiṇaṭi, Salakaṇa, Vaṇikana, etc., are some of such words found in them. It may be seen from these forms that they have been adapted from words of Sanskrit origin to conform to the genius of the Tamil language.

Words like kuṭippita (kuṭippilla) (Marūgāḷtalai) piranta (Śittannavāśal), and sēyta (Śittannavāśal) which are all adjectival participles of the Tamil language are found used quite correctly in these records.

Terms indicating professions, pon kulavan, pūvāṇikan, and pānita-vaṇikan occurring in the Alagarmalai labels, pon-vaṇikan and vannakan occurring in the Pugalīyūr inscriptions, tasaṇ (taceṇ) found in the Māmāṇḍūr records are all Tamil forms in use even from such early times.

Terms like nāṭu and ur found in these inscriptions obviously denoted territorial divisions. They are Tamil terms still in use in the Tamil country.⁵⁴ 

The word uraiyul in the sense of ‘residing at’ used in the Anaimalai record is very significant. This term had been in use in ancient times and is found used in classical Tamil literature, though in later times it does not appear to have been so popular.

The use of the word tanta in the Māmāṇḍūr inscriptions as an adjectival participle in the sense of ‘conqueror of’ reminds one of its use in classical Tamil literature.⁵⁵

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⁵⁴. C. Narayana Rao tries to make the word nāṭu or nāṭu a word of Sanskrit origin, deriving it from nata, to wander. This need not be discussed in detail here. But it will suffice to note that this term as indicating a territorial division has been used in the Tamil country and that in the Tamil language.

⁵⁵. See for instance Āriyap-patai tantanēdujjēliyai:
    Ollaiyur tanta Pāḷa-Pāṇdiyai etc.
The use of the adjective indicating the place or origin or the profession as a prefix to the name of the person, vēn Kōsīpan (Marugāṭalai) Erukōṭūr Ila-Kuṭumpikān Pōlālaiyan (Tirupparaṇakunṟam) is a Dravidian form. In Sanskrit inscriptions these are found placed after the names.  

The use of the aspirated ṭha of the Sanskrit alphabet in these records appears to have a special significance. The places where it is found are:

Āṇaimalai: Ariṭṭha Koyipan
Karungāḷakkudi: Eṭhuva ur

These would indicate that the letter has been used in places where ordinarily the hard consonant would be doubled as ṭṭa. The aspirated ṭha of Sanskrit is written as ṭṭa here. The change of the final a long of the Sanskrit word into ai is a peculiarity in the Tamil language. cf.: SK. Māla = Tamil mālai; SK. Sītā = Tamil Cītai; SK. Maṇimekhalā = Tamil Maṇimekalai; SK-Dvāraka = Tamil Tuvaṇakai. The change of u into i in the middle letter cannot, however, be easily explained. Very likely it is to be accounted for by local dialectical variation. But it is seen that this changed form continued in Tamil even up to the tenth century A.D. The Cōla king Parāntaka I, the conqueror of Madurai is designated in his inscriptions by the title Matirai kōnta ko-p-Parakēsari.

The nature and form of these inscriptions which mainly give out the names of the donors restrict our knowledge of the language to the barest. But still the above would clearly show that the language employed in them was Tamil, and that these records follow the diction and grammar of classical Tamil as gleaned from the earliest grammatical work, the Tolkappiyam.

One peculiarity found in the language of these inscriptions should, however, be noted. In the words Kuṭupita, Koṭupilōṇ Koṭupitavaṇ, tacaṇ etc., used in these records, the doubling of the consonants required according to the rules of Tamil grammar is not met with. Their correct forms should be kuṭuppita.

57. It is said that the Southern Madurai, the capital of the Pāṇḍyas, owes its name to Mathurā (i.e. the modern Muttra) of Puranic fame in North India.
koṭūppitō, Koṭūppittavān and taccān. Probably this peculiarity is due to the influence of Prākṛt. But this dropping of the pure consonants without doubling is met with in the early Tamil inscriptions of the later Pallavas and the early Cōḷas also. This is also met with occasionally in classical Tamil literature. Some of such instances, if not all, may be attributed to the exigencies of metre. Further it is also likely that in those days the hard consonants of the Tamil alphabet were pronounced as surd mutes and the changing of the sounds of these from surd to sonant according to the place of their occurrence in the words take place according to philologists in the speech sound at a later date.

If it is accepted that the language of these inscriptions is Tamil the very pertinent question naturally arises how it is that these early inscriptions of the Tamil country are alone in Tamil and not in Prākṛt, when all the early inscriptions written in the Brāhmi script found all over the country are in the Prākṛt language. It is true that all the Brāhmi inscriptions found not only in North India but also in the Karnāṭaka and Āndhra areas including the Brāhmi record found at Malakonda in the Nellore District on the northern borders of the Tamil country are written in the Prākṛt language. In this connection one important point must be borne in mind. Inscriptions are intended to be read and their contents understood by those who see them, and not incised on rocks and boulders as mere ornamental pieces. That was the main reason why these inscriptions were written in prominent places easy to catch the eyes of persons visiting them. As such the script and language employed should be such as could be easily read and understood by the people of the locality. Therefore, every inscription should be incised only in the local language, if the official language was different and it was not understood in the area. Though Prākṛt which appears to have been the official language in the Mauryan Empire and inscriptions in that language were understood by its subjects, the language of the Tamil country, which lay outside the Mauryan Empire and was independent, was Tamil and conditions in it were different. Probably Prākṛt had not made much inroad into it by the period of these records.\footnote{Even in the Prākṛt language of the Asokan inscriptions various forms due to dialectical variations have been traced.} Hence these
Brāhmi records had necessarily to be written in the language of the locality, namely Tamil. Under the circumstances it would be wrong and unreasonable to expect these inscriptions to be written in any other language.  

But one thing seems to be clear. The basically Tamil language used in these inscriptions was different from the Tamil language used in the Sangam literary works and contains a good proportion of Prākṛt words. Probably the view that the language employed in many of these lithic records is Tamil in its formative stages, 69 may not be quite easy of acceptance though it betrays much unsteadiness in its grammatical and other features showing that it was less homogeneous and regular in its characteristics. Its difference from the literary Tamil from the point of style was obviously due to the fact that — "those who have been responsible for the records in question were obviously Buddhist and/or Jaina (and Ājivika ?) monks using a hybrid jargon with great admiration for Pāli and/or Prākṛt and they cannot be surely suspected of a strong inclination toward a standardized, polished and correct literary usage." 61 From the third century B.C. Buddhist Jaina and Ājivika teachers who came to South India and settled down in different localities, learnt the local languages and moved with the people speaking to them obviously in their own languages doing religious work among them winning the affection and respect of at least some of them. The language of these inscriptions is that of these religious teachers and their followers in the Tamil country.

59. Probably it was the same case with regard to the language of the Cave Inscriptions in Brahmī found in large numbers in Ceylon. Though it can be classed as a Prākṛt it is distinct from any known language and should be treated only as Sinhalese in its oldest form (see note on these records in the appendix at the end of this chapter.)


APPENDIX

A NOTE ON THE CEYLON CAVE BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS

Both Krishna Sastri and K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar have in their study of the Brâhmi inscriptions of the Tamil country made pointed references to the cave inscriptions in the Brâhmi script found in Ceylon, and tried to compare the two. But the Ceylon cave inscriptions have not been studied so far with the care and importance they deserve. “Though it is estimated that there are very nearly three thousand cave inscriptions, few have been published and fewer still have been edited in the Archeaological and Epigraphical Journals. Probably their brevity and the stereotyped nature of their contents have dissuaded scholars from spending time upon them.” These records are almost all in a very good state of preservation. They are usually incised deep into the rock and the letters are large, so that a person standing at the mouth of the cave may be able to read them. Thus it is possible even to make accurate eye copies of these records without the usual process of ink estampages and photographic copies.

These Brâhmi records which are the earliest inscriptions of Ceylon are found in large numbers inscribed under the drip-ledges of rock caves found among the many outcrops of gneiss such as Vessagiri, Sigiri, Dambulla and Ritigala that dot the northern, eastern and southern plains of the island. Some of them are found inscribed on the surfaces of rocks. Thus from the point of the places where they are found they are similar to those found in the Tamil country.

1. This note is based mainly on the article “The Brâhmi Inscriptions as a Source for the study of the early history of Ceylon” by Dr. S. Lakshman Perera. Published in the Ceylon Historical Journal, Vol. I, No. 2; (October, 1951) pp. 73-96, and is intended to invite the attention of the South Indian scholars in general and the Tamil research scholars both in this country and Ceylon.


3. Ibid., p 87.
The script of these inscriptions is almost the same as the Brāhmi of the Aśokan inscriptions.\(^4\) It appears that there were two stages in the evolution of the Brāhmi script in Ceylon. It is believed that the script comes nearest in form to the Aśokan characters in the first century A.D. and before that period it was less developed.\(^5\) It is also said that by the end of the first century A.D. the Brāhmi script in Ceylon began to develop a bend of its own. Hence these records have been dated roughly from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. However, it is difficult to fix the date of a record definitely “on the basis of palaeographical evidence supplied by the development of the script, except within very wide limits.”\(^6\) Apart from such palaeographical considerations, it may be taken that since these records register donations to the Buddhist Sangha, their period must be placed after the introduction of Buddhism in the island; and as side earlier, the island received the religion during the days of Aśoka. Hence the inscriptions may be taken to belong to the period from the third century B.C.

Like similar cave inscriptions found in the Tamil country, these early inscriptions in Ceylon consist of at the most one or two sentences, set always in the same form. “The language of the inscriptions is Sinhalese in its oldest form. Though it can be classed as Prākrit it is distinct from any known language. The nature and form of the cave inscriptions however do not permit us to glean from them anything but the barest about the language.”\(^7\)

Certain terms like Aya, Parumaka etc. indicating the status of the donors are interesting. It is said about the former: “It also happens that lines of such rulers (Raja) together with princes entitled Aya hold sway in areas far removed from the main seat of government.” ......Since Raja is a royal title the conclusion to be drawn from this is that they were semi-independent local rulers, who flourished for a time and were finally absorbed by the

7. Ibid.
more powerful rulers of the north. It may be noted that this word resembles very much the term ay in Tamil indicating the line of petty rulers who held sway over the Vēnaḍū in the early days. It is well known that there was close contact between the Tamil country, especially the Pāṇḍyan territory and Ceylon in those days as even now, and many kings of Pāṇḍyan origin or connection ruled in Ceylon as kings.

The term parumaka, though found very frequently in the early inscriptions from Ceylon is difficult of correct explanation. It has been suggested that it may indicate village elders or a class of landed gentry. Very likely it is the Tamil word perumakan.

In view of the close proximity of the island to the mainland of India and of the influence of the Pāṇḍyan rulers over the island, it is very likely that traces of the Tamil language also are found in the cave Brāhmi inscriptions in Ceylon. A study of the Ceylon inscriptions from this point of view, which does not seem to have been seriously attempted so far, may possibly bear ample fruit.

9. Ibid., p. 95. Can it mean a village assembly also?
CHAPTER V
THE AUTHORS OF THE INSCRIPTIONS

The earliest inscriptions in the Tamil country are found engraved in the natural caves and caverns in the generally inaccessible heights and slopes of some of the hills in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Kamanathapuram, Tiruchirappalli and Coimbatore and a few in the North Arcot and Chingleput districts in the Madras State. One is found in the Nellore district of the Andhra Pradesh. With some dressing the caves were made fairly fit for human habitation. Not very far from the bustle and noise of the inhabited areas, and yet solemn and quiet, these places were obviously resorted to by religious people who wanted seclusion and calmness for leading a life of contemplation and religious exercise. Some of the caves are found to exist amidst picturesque surroundings and provided with stone beds carved out of rock and water convenience; all of them appear to have served as ideal resorts for the serious and religious minded few devoted to a life of seclusion, high thinking and simple living. The period that may be assigned to the lithic records found in these natural caverns and caves is the second century B.C. to the first century A.D.

The caves and caverns in the Tamil country are associated with the Jains, Buddhists and the Ajivikas, whose arrival and spread formed one of the important aspects of the religious history of South India during the pre-Christian era. These religions appear to have reached the Tamil country in the third and second centuries B.C. when the Mauryan Empire was at the height of its power and influence under its rulers.

To take up first the early history of Jainism in South India. Our knowledge of the coming in of the religion to the south is mainly based on the evidence of a few inscriptions in the Karnataka country and some Jaina sacred books, the traditional accounts contained in which are not always uniform. Both the classes of evidence are of a comparatively late date. In considering these sources and light they throw on the coming in of Jainism to South India one important point has, however, to be borne in mind, namely that the mere coming of a group or
number of people professing a particular religion to a particular area or territory need not and cannot necessarily mean the spread of the religion in that area. Distinction has to be made between the migration of a religious community to an area and the spread of its religion in that area. This is equally true of Buddhism also.

Among the available epigraphical records bearing on the coming in of Jainism to South India one on the rock called variously as Candragiri, Kaṭavapra and Kalbappu at the celebrated Jaina centre Sravana-Belgoḷa in the Channarayapatna taluk in the Hassan District in the Mysore State is the earliest and has been assigned to the sixth century A.D. on palaeographical grounds. The inscription says:

"Bhadrabha-vämi—of a lineage rendered illustrious by a succession of great men who came in regular descent from the venerable supreme Gautama-ganadhara, his immediate disciple Lohäya, Jambu, Viśṇudëva, Aparäjita, Govardhana, Bhadrabha Viśäkha, Prośhila, Kṛttikärya, Jayanäma, Siddhartha, Dhräṣṭëna, Buddhila and other teachers who was acquainted with the true nature of the eight-fold great omens and was a seer of the past, the present and the future, having learnt from an omen and foretold in Ujjayani a calamity lasting for a period of twelve years, the entire sangha (or community) set out from the North to the South and reached by degrees a country counting many hundreds of villages and filled with happy people, wealth, gold, grain, and herds of cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep.

"Then separating himself from the sangha and Ācārya Prabhācandra by name, perceiving that but little time remained for him to live and desiring to accomplish samadhi, the goal of penance associated with right conduct this high peaked mountain which forms an ornament to the earth and bears the name Kaṭavapra bade farewell to and dismissed the sangha in its entirety and in company with a single disciple, mortifying his body on the wide expanse of the cold rocks, accomplished (samadhi)."
There are a few inscriptions that associate Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta with Sravaṇa-Belgola. An inscription of about A.D. 1100 in one of the caves in the hill mentions the worship of the feet of Bhadrabāhu-svāmī. Two inscriptions found on the north bank of the River Kāverī near Srirangapattana of about A.D. 900 say that the summit of the Kaṭbappu hill (Candragiri) was marked by the impress of the feet of the great sages Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta. An inscription at Sravaṇa-Belgola itself of about A.D. 650 refers to the sages Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta and says that the Jaina religion which had prospered under their lead had become weak by then and Śāntīśēna revived it. Again an inscription of A.D. 1129 mentions both of them and says that Chandragupta by the merit of being the disciple of Bhadrabāhu was served by the forest deities for a long time, while still another one of A.D. 1163 mentions both of them and says that the sages of Chandragupta's gaṇa were worshipped by the forest deities. A still later inscription of A.D. 1432 says that Chandragupta who was a disciple of Bhadrabāhu was bowed to by the chief gods on account of his perfect conduct and severe penance. These traditions about Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta recorded in some inscriptions are supported by a few other pieces of evidence. The smaller hill at the place is said to be called Candragiri on account of the fact that Chandragupta is believed to have performed penance there, and the Chandragupta-basti is said to be called so since it was caused to be erected by the Emperor. Besides, a cave on the hill is called after Bhadrabāhu since he is said to have expired in it and the foot prints found there are believed to be his.

Traditions about the association of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta with Sravaṇa-Belgola are contained in some Jain literary works of the Śvetambaras and Digambaras. According to the Śvetambara traditions Bhadrabāhu, the fifth Śrutahevalin,

4. Ibid., III, Nos. 147, and 148.
5. Ibid., II, No. 31.
6. Ibid., No. 67.
7. Ibid., No. 64.
8. Ibid., 258.
9. See Ibid., Introd., p. 36.
predicted a twelve years famine in Magadha, led the Jaina sangha to the Karnataka along with his disciple Chandragupta, and after the famine, returned to North India. He entrusted the leadership of the sangha to Sthulabhadra, the sixth and the last Srutakevalin and retired to Nepal where he died in 170 A.V. i.e. 357 B.C. 10 According to one of the Digambara traditions Bhadrabahu the fifth Srutakevalin gave jinadika to Chandragupta. Predicting a twelve years’ famine in Ujjain, Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta migrated with the sangha to the Karnataka. When they reached the smaller hill at Sravana-Belgola, called Katavapa in Sanskrit, Bhadrabahu foresaw that his end was drawing near, sent the sangha to the Coila and Pandya countries under the leadership of one Viskhacarya and stayed behind and died on the hill at Sravana-Belgola, attended by his disciple Chandragupta. The latter survived his guru for twelve years at that place itself and died in 162 A.V. i.e. 365 B.C. after welcoming back the emigrants on their return to North India at the end of the famine.

Similar traditions with slight variations are found in a few other Jaina works. One of them, the Bhat-Kathakosha, a Sanskrit work by Harisena (A.D. 931), contains the following account. Bhadrabahu, who had king Chandragupta as his disciple, predicted a twelve years famine in the country, sent Chandragupta muni who was also called Viskhacarya, along with the sangha to the south and himself stayed behind, since he thought that his end was approaching. Viskhacarya led the sangha to the Punnaja kingdom, 11 in the south. Bhadrabahu went to Bhadrapada, a part of Ujjain and expired there fasting for many days. After the twelve years’ famine ended Viskhacarya returned to Madhyadesa with the sangha. 12 According to the Bhadrabahu carita, a Sanskrit work by Ratnandari (C.A.D. 1450), Bhadrabahu predicted a twelve years’ famine in Ujjain and migrated to the Karnataka along with twelve thousand disciples. When he

10. Jainasena purva Purana, II, vv. 139-42; M. G. Pai, Sahita Purashak Patrika, XXVI, pp. 2.3.

11. This is the same as Paumnata mentioned by Ptolemy and was in the Mysore district with the modern Kittur in the Heggadevan Kote taluk in the district as its capital (See Ep. Car., Vol. II, Introdn., p. 37 n. 2)

reached a forest he saw that his end was drawing near, appointed Viṣākhācārya to his own place and asked him to lead the sangha to the south. He stayed behind, attended by Chandragupta, while the others proceeded to the Coḷa country. Bhadrabāhu then expired, performing sallekhana. The sage Chandragupta drew a likeness of his guru’s feet and was worshipping them. When Viṣākhācārya returned, he paid homage at the tomb of Bhadrabāhu, and being duly honoured by Chandraguptamuni, left for Kanyakūṭha.

Cidāṇandakavi’s (C. A. D. 1680) Kannāḍa work Maṇiṇavamsa-bhyudaya contains some information about Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta. According to it when Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu was living in Cikka-beṭṭa in Belgola he was perhaps killed by a tiger, and his feet (foot-prints) were even then (period of the composition of the work) worshipped. Dakṣiṇācārya came to the place by order of the sage Arhadbali. Chandragupta, who had also come there on pilgrimage took dikṣā from him and was offering worship to the God in the temple founded by him as also the foot prints of Bhadrabāhu. Later Chandragupta succeeded to the position of Dakṣiṇācārya,¹⁴ The Rajavaliṅkhā of Devacandra (A.D. 1838) says that Bhadrabāhu predicted to Chandragupta a twelve years’ famine, and when it actually commenced, Chandragupta abdicated in favour of his son Simhasena, took dikṣā and joined him. Both of them migrated to the south with twelve thousand disciples. On the way Bhadrabāhu saw that his end was nearing; and stopping at a hill along with Chandragupta, sent Viṣākhācārya and his disciples to the Coḷa and Pāṇḍya countries. On the death of Bhadrabāhu, Chandragupta performed the funeral rites and continued to reside in a cave worshipping the foot prints of his guru. Bhāskara, the son of Simhasena and grandson of Chandragupta himself visited the place, stayed there for some time and built some Jaina temples and a city near Candragiri which was named Belgola. Later Chandragupta himself died on the hill.¹⁴ With these literary traditions may be compared the epigraphical evidence cited above about the

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15. Ibid., p. 38-39.
association of Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta with Sravanga-Belgola.

From the conflicting and contradictory nature of the evidence it is really difficult to say anything definite about the Jaina migration to the Mysore area. But it must be noted that all accounts are agreed on two important points: (i) the prediction by Bhadrabahu of a famine for a period of twelve years and (ii) the migration of a strong Jaina community to South India. Besides, there is also general agreement on the fact that the Bhadrabahu with whose name the Jaina migration to the South has been associated was Srutakevalin of that name who had a disciple in the person of a Chandragupta, who according to traditional belief, was the founder of the Maurya dynasty.

Opinion is divided among scholars about the authenticity of these traditions and the identity of Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta. Leumann believes in the traditions and the association of the two with the Jaina migration and says that the Jaina migration to the south was the initial fact of the Digambara tradition.16 Hoernle who has examined the Jaina paṭṭavaḷis or succession lists of gurus says: “Before Bhadrabahu the Jaina community was undivided; with him the Digambaras separated from the Śvetambaras—The Śvetembara paṭṭavaḷis know only one Bhadrabahu, who, from the dates assigned to him by the Śvetambaras and Digambaras alike, must be identical with Bhadrabahu I of the Digambaras. Considering the varying and the contradictory character of the Digambara traditions, the probability is that the inception of the great separation took place under Bhadrabahu I, who died in 182 A.V. according to the Digambaras or 170 A.V. according to the Śvetambaras17—The Digambara separation originally took place as a result of the separation southwards under Bhadrabahu in consequence of a severe famine in Bihar, the original home of the undivided Jain community.”18 Hoernle is thus inclined to think that the Jaina

17. According to Jacobi “the date of Bhadrabahu's death is placed identically by all Jaina authors from Hemachandra down to the most modern scholiast in the year 170 A.V.” (Kapasta, saira, Intro., p. 13).
migration to the south took place under the Śrūtakēvalin Bhadrabāhu.

The possibility of there being some truth in the tradition of the migration of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta to the south is, it is claimed, suggested by a few other pieces of evidence also. According to F. W. Thomas, Chandragupta was a confirmed Jain. He says “That Chandragupta was a member of the Jaina community is taken by their writers as a matter of course and treated as a known fact which needed neither argument nor demonstration.” 18 Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta, refers to the close connection which the emperor had with the Śramaṇas in matters of religion as distinguished from the Brahmans (Brachmanes) and the Buddhists (Boutta), when he says that “They (the Śramaṇas) communicate with the kings, who consult them by messengers regarding the causes of things and who through them worship and supplicate the deity.” 19 The Śarmaṇes (Śramaṇas) were obviously the same as the Germanes mentioned by Strabo and Samanæans mentioned by Porphyrus. It has been suggested that they may have belonged to one sect of Jina or to another. 20 It is possible that even in those early days the Jains were known as Śramaṇas. Aśoka used the term sangaḥa while speaking of the Buddhists while he used the word Śramaṇa, when referring to the Jains. 21 It may be noted also that Kuṇḍakundacaraya, the earliest of the Pīgambara Jaina writers of South India, refers to the members of his own sect by the term Śramaṇa. 22

Thomas was definite that they were the Jains and Chandragupta “submitted to the devotional teachings of the Śramaṇas as opposed to the doctrines of the Brahmans.” He further says that the fact that Aśoka was a Jain to begin with and later changed to Buddhism, would also show that Chandragupta was a Jain. Further it has been argued that Chandragupta's

18a. Thomas, Jainism or the Early Faith of Asoka, p. 23.
22. Pravacana sāra, Introdn., p. XXI; Bhandarker, Report an Sanskrit Manuscripts, 1883-84, pp. 97-100; also S. R. Sharma, Jainism and Karnataka Culture, p. 7.
Jaina creed is borne out by the facts that, according to the Mudrarākasasa of Viśakhadatta, the Jains occupied an important position at the time of the Mauryan revolution led by Chandragupta, and Cāṇakya employed a Jain as one of his emissaries in the accomplishment of the revolution.

A few other arguments have been advanced to show that Chandragupta changed a Jain and discarded public life. It is said that he ascended the Magadhan throne when he was fairly young, ruled for twenty-four years and then gave place to his son Bindusāra. At that time he could not have been more than fifty years old. There is nothing to show that he either died in battle or died a natural death. In the absence of any evidence of his death, it has been assumed that he could have retired from the throne in order to devote himself, in accordance with the dictates of the Jaina religion, to an ascetic life in the last stage of his existence and accompanied Bhadrabāhu to the South, and that might be the explanation of his early disappearance from public notice and of silence regarding his further career, for absolute renunciation of all earthly ties was the essence of the vow he had taken. According to the South Indian traditions he lived at Sravāṇa-Belgoḷa for twelve years after the decease of Bhadrabāhu and died when he was probably sixty-two years of age. Lewis Rice who has accepted all these lines of reasoning thinks that the migration of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta along with a large number of Jains could have been taken place. V.A. Smith was at first inclined to discredit the Bhadrabāhu—Chandragupta tradition as ‘imaginative history.’ But ‘after much consideration’ he revised his views and admitted ‘the main facts as affirmed by tradition’ to have solid foundation in fact and said ‘in short the Jaina tradition holds the field and no alternative account exists,’ and again ‘I am disposed to believe that the tradition is probably true in its main outline.’ Narasimhabhar of Mysore also believed in the traditions and observed ‘the evidence may not be quite decisive, but it may be accepted as a

24. Rice Myore and Coorg from Inscriptions, p. 9
25. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
working hypothesis until the contrary is proved by future research."

But there are also scholars who are not disposed to accept the evidence of these traditions about the migration of the Jains to the South in the third century B.C. Among them are Fleet, Shama Sastri and M. Govinda Pai.

Fleet admitted that the Jaina migration to South India may well be a historical fact, whether it started from Ujjain or any other place in North India. But he felt that the association of Candragupta Māurya with the fifth Śrūtakevalin Bhadrabāhu and their migration to Śravaṇa Belgola cannot be believed because of the discrepant and conflicting nature of the literary and epigraphical evidence relating to them. He was inclined to identify Bhadrabāhu of the traditions with the Upāngi acārya Bhadrabāhu II of Hoernle's pāṭāvalis of the Sarasvatī Gaccha, the last but one of the Minor Angins who is said to have become pontiff in 53 B.C. He also identified Chandragupta of the traditions with Guptīgupta, the disciple of Bhadrabāhu II, and thought that he was also known by the names of Arhadbalin and Viśākhācārya who became pontiff in 31 B.C.

Dhirendra Nath Mookerjee who has examined this question arrives at a similar conclusion and says that it was the Upāngi acārya Bhadrabāhu II, who became pontiff in 53 B.C. and died in 31 B.C., that led the migration to South India and that the monarch Chandragupta who accompanied him was "Chandragupta I Vikramādiya who founded the era of 53 B.C." He adds that "as Bhadrabāhu died in V. S. 27, Chandragupta I left the crown about V. S. 26, and as according to Jaina tradition he lived for twelve years more after Ācārya Bhārabahu’s death, Chandragupta I died about V. S. 39-19 B.C. during Samudragupta’s rule." He is further inclined to think that Chandra of the Meharauli (Delhi) Iron Pillar Inscription was this Chandragupta.

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31. Journal of Indian History, Vol. XX, pp. 249-274.
Shama Sastri thinks that the Chandragupta of the Jaina traditions was Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty and says: "It is possible that it was this Chandragupta, who in his old age embraced Jainism and being moved with pity at the sight of the famished people—left the country in the company of Bhadrabāhu III, a Jain teacher, to spend his days in solitude in Śravaṇa-Belgola in Mysore under the rule of his father-in-law (i.e. Mayūraśarman of the Kadamba dynasty, whose daughter, he seems to have married)." 38

Govinda Pai, who has examined this question in detail, argues that the Bhadrabāhu who migrated to the Karnatāka country with 12,000 Jains was none other than the fifth Śrutakevalin of the name, but his disciple was not Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya dynasty, and the grand father of Aśoka, who continued to be of the Brahmanical faith throughout his life but Sampratī, who was the grand son of Aśoka and was also called Chandragupta. He bases his conclusion on the evidence of the Vaddāradhane, a Kannada work of Śivakoṭyācārya, which had a Prakrit original written in North India probably in the second or third century A.D. The antiquity of the Prakrit work may be judged from the fact that it mentions only three Vedas as also some foreign coins like the drachma and dinara which were current in parts of North-West India in the period between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D. According to the work, when Sampratī Chandragupta was the ruler of Ujjayini, the fifth Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu gave him jinadikṣā by his own hands; and fore-seeing a great famine for a period of twelve years, both of them migrated to the Karnatāka where the former died at Kaḷbappu, the Kannada form of the Sanskrit word Kaṭavaprā Govinda Pai thinks that Bhadrabāhu's death must have occurred in the first half of the third century B.C., since he was a contemporary of Sampratī Chandragupta, the grandson of Aśoka and that the date given by the Śvetambaras and Digambaras has to be dismissed as unhistorical. 39

But all these theories are difficult of acceptance. It must be remembered that all the traditions are unanimous in saying that it was Bhadrabahu who could see the past, the present and the future (trikalajña) and that predicting a famine in North India migrated to the south. And that could have been the fifth Srutakevalin Bhadrabahu who is said to have possessed such great powers. The identification proposed by Shama Sastii depends very much on the correctness of the date given by him for the commencement of the Gupta Era, namely 200-201 A.D. But this initial date for the Gupta Era has not found favour with scholars. Secondly there is nothing on record to show that in the Gupta period which was a strikingly flourishing age in Indian history there was a great famine in North India which led to the migration of a large number of Jainas to South India. Besides, Chandragupta II was of the Brahmanical faith throughout his life and it is impossible to believe that he could have turned a Jaina. More than all, while the Svetambara tradition mentions only one Bhadrabahu, the Digambara tradition mentions two Bhadrabahu. There does not appear to be any historical or traditional basis to argue that there were three Bhadrabahu. Dhirendra Nath Mookerjee's attempted identification of the Chandragupta of the Jaina traditions with Chandragupta I of the Gupta dynasty and also with the author of the Maharauli Pillar Inscription, and his statement that he lived just before the commencement of the Christian era have yet to be proved by reliable evidence. Govinda Pai's position seems to be stronger; but it must also prove unacceptable when it is seen that Chandragupta Maurya turned a Jaina and followed Bhadrabahu to the Karnatak country after abdicating his throne.

Though there may be some reason for differences of opinion among scholars regarding the period of the advent of Jainism in the Karnatak, there is no reason to doubt the existence of some Jaina settlements in the Tamil country, particularly in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tiruchirapalli and Coimbatore in the extreme south of the peninsula in the third and second centuries B.C. But some doubt has been expressed with regard to the region through which Jainism came to the Tamil country, whether it was through Andhradeva or
the Karnātaka country. To consider them one after the other.

The Mahāvamsa, a Buddhist chronicle of the fifth century A.D., while describing the consecration of prince Pāṇḍukabhaya in Ceylon mentions the fresh constructions in Anuradhapura, the new capital, among which was a house for the Niṅgaṇṭha Jotiya to the east of the cemetery. In that area were living Niṅgaṇṭha Giri and many ascetics of various heretical sects. The ruler also constructed a chapel for Niṅgaṇṭha Kumbhaṇḍa which was named after him. The ruler also erected a dwelling for the Ajivikas. The term Niṅgaṇṭha is the Prākrit form of the word Niṅgrantha, meaning a follower of the Jaina faith. Since the reign period of Pāṇḍukabhaya has been placed between 377 and 307 B.C., it has been suggested that the building of a house as a temple for the Niṅgranthas at the capital must be assigned to the period. From these it has been presumed that Jainism had reached at least the northern part of Ceylon and had attained a position to receive attention from the king of the island. It is further urged that “it also points to the possibility that the Tamil land might have come into contact with the creed of Lord Jaina by the period of the fourth century B.C. or even earlier. For, on account of their proximity, closer relationship subsisted between Ceylon and the Tamil country; and the Jaina missionaries like the protagonists of the Buddhist faith might have naturally preached their doctrine in the latter region, prior to their immigration into the island by the land route through peninsular India.” It has further been suggested that Jainism spread to South India from the Kalinga and the Andhra deśa for it is believed that Mahāvira himself visited the Kalinga and laid the foundations for the spread of his doctrine there. Further it is surmised that Jainism must have come to the Tamil country even before the Bhadrabāhu-Chandragupta period, for as said earlier, some traditional accounts relating to the migration of Jinas from North India to the Karnātaka country say that Bhadrabāhu at the time of his death nominated his disciple Viśakhācārya as the leader of the Jinas.

34. Geiger, Māhāvamsa, p. 75.
35. Ibid., Introdm., p. xxxvi.
37. Ibid., pp. 3 and 25.
and asked him to proceed further into the Cōla and Paṇḍya countries.  

The above conclusions have, it appears, been drawn on very slender evidence. Though the Mahāvamsa mentions the Nirgranthas and some constructions for them at Anurādhapura during the time of the Ceylonese king Paṇḍukabhaya in the fourth century B.C., it is not known how much of the account is historical and how much is traditional and legendary. It is well known that the sphere of activity of Mahāvira was restricted to his homeland; and at the time of his death Jainism had not spread beyond the region where it was born. It does not appear that the activities of Mahāvira extended beyond the Magadhan kingdom and the adjoining regions in Northern India during his time; and the accounts that associate him with Kalinga are not to be very much relied upon for historical purposes. Further the traditional accounts which mention that Bhadrabāhu sent his disciples Viṣakhācārya and all others except one to the Cōla and Paṇḍya countries, even if there is any historical truth in them, do not necessarily mean that the people of the Tamil country were already familiar with the doctrine (of Jainism). It is difficult to believe from the above that Jainism had reached the Tamil country even so early as, the fifth or fourth century B.C.

Therefore evidence about the coming in of Jainism to the extreme south has to be sought for elsewhere; and such evidence is supplied in sufficient measure by a few of the natural caverns in some hills and rocks lying in out of the way places in the southernmost parts of the Madras State. These caverns which appear to have been used for religious purposes were made fit for human occupation and provided wherever necessary or possible with beds cut into them. The beds were chiselled smooth with one side raised a little meant to serve as pillows for persons lying on them. The grooves in the outer fringes of most of the caverns were cut in such a way that rain water was prevented from flowing into them, but was carried off to some distance. Some of the caverns had big holes cut on the open yard, apparently for fixing poles or railings, besides a number of smaller ones which were used obviously in different ways to protect the caves. These oldest monuments in the Paṇḍya country are also the oldest in

Southern India itself." Locally the hills in which these caverns are found are called *pañcapanḍava malai* (the hill of the five Pañḍavas). A particular hill in the Madurai district is itself called Aivar-malai (the hill of the five), five being obviously a reference to the Pañḍavas. The beds in the monuments are called *pañcapanḍava paṭukkai*, popularly translated as the bed of the five Pañḍavas. Such a literal translation or interpretation of the two terms does not, however, appear to have much significance, for there is nothing to show that the Pañḍavas of the *Mahābhārata* had anything to do with them. Further, in many cases the number of beds are not five in a cavern, but more than twice or thrice the number of the Pañḍavas.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, while examining the religious associations of the monuments thinks that they were Buddhist and says that the term *pañcapanḍavamalai* "strongly reminds us of the Pañḍava-pabbata at whose foot the Buddha after his renunciation took his first meal which he had obtained by begging; and this fact suggests that these caves might have been the favourite resorts of Buddha bhikshus who probably had their meals in them, as the name *Uṇḍankal* ‘the rock of one who took a meal’ applied to one of them indicates, and should have been called *Pañḍavamalai* after the name of the monument where the Great One, whom they followed in every way first resided. In this connection, it is also worthy of note that some of these hills are termed *Kaḷugumalai*, a Tamil rendering of the Sanskrit *Gṛḍhakaṭa*, the hill occupied by the Buddha during his ascetic life. That this practice of naming monasteries after those (the names of places associated with the life and activities) of the Great One was in vogue in Ceylon also may be gathered from the name *Jēlavanārama* given to one of the monasteries of Anurādhapura, evidently after the one built for the Buddha by the rich merchant Anathapiṇḍika at Sravasti and in which the Buddha passed several years of his life."

He further thinks that the caverns of the Tamil country have close resemblance to similar early monuments in Ceylon and says that they "go to prove the fact that they must have all

come into existence at the same time shaped by the same hands and for the same purpose". The close relation between Ceylon and the Tamil country from such early times is borne out by literary evidence. The Mahavamsa says, for instance, that Mahinda and the principal theras who followed him to Ceylon, besides those of whom Aritta was the chief one, as also a large number of sanctified Ceylonese priests and priestesses spread abroad the Buddhist creed. It has also been suggested that the caverns were used by the Buddhist priests for pious meditation. "Whether they were primarily designed as a provision for the annual retreat initiated by the Buddha when it was ordained that the monks were to keep vassa and refrain from peregrination during the hot season cannot now be easily determined. The doubt raised in the first part of the passage quoted here whether the caverns were designed for the annual retreat or were intended to give a cool resort can be cleared from the reply which Mahinda gave to Tissa when the latter requested the saint to halt in the beautiful garden near his capital on a certain night. The statement of the theras shows that the Buddhist monks were prohibited by the rules of their order from staying even in the nearest proximity of cities or villages; in a way it also accounts for the necessity of the caverns."

There are however some difficulties in taking all these early jithic monuments of south India as Buddhist, though it is possible that at least in the third century B.C., Buddhism had reached the Tamil country. As said earlier the main reason put forward by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar to show that they are of Buddhist origin or association is that they resemble in many respects the caverns in Ceylon. But it must be remembered that in spite of their similarity, there are absolutely no Buddhist remains in the caverns in the Tamil country while such remains are found in the caverns in Ceylon. Apart from that, as will be seen from the sequel, many of these caverns in the Tamil country have Jaina associations. Near the caverns at places like Tirupparankunram, Alagarmalai, Mutupatthi, Kilavalavu, Kalugumalai, Sittannavasal, Sundakkaparai, and a few others are found Jaina

42. Ibid., pp. 280-81.
43. Ibid., p. 280.
figures which may be taken as bearing testimony to the Jaina association of these monuments. It may be that some of the Jaina sculptures were made and consecrated at a later date on the rocks of the caverns containing relics of an earlier period, such as the beds and Brāhmī inscriptions associated with the Jainas. However, they are indicative of the Jaina association of these monuments.

As said earlier, most of these caverns are known locally as pañcapāṇḍava paṇḍukkai. Since even caverns having Jaina association are also so called, there is no particular significance in associating them with the Buddhists and the Paṇḍavapabbata.

The age of these caverns and the pañcapāṇḍava paṇḍukkais in them may be determined with the help of the Brāhmī inscriptions engraved on the rocks near many of these caverns or in the caverns themselves, or sometimes on the pillows or beds in them. Palaeographically these inscriptions which bear close resemblance to the cave records of Ceylon of almost the same period and the Bhatṭiprolu Brāhmī inscriptions may, as said earlier, be assigned from the third to the first century B.C., though there is much difficulty experienced in deciphering and grouping of the letters and words in them and interpreting them. As will be seen in the sequel, these inscriptions, which record either donations of the caverns to some people or mention the men residing in them, may be assigned to the period to which the caverns themselves belong. The men who resided in these caverns, were not only holy men who belonged to the Buddhist order, but also to the Jaina or Ājivika orders. Thus there is nothing particularly Buddhist about them. On the other hand they show that quite like Buddhism, Jainism and Ājivikism also had come to the Tamil country by the third century B.C., and some holy men of the Jaina and Ājivika orders also retired to these caverns and spent their time in seclusion and religious exercise, though it cannot on that account be said that Jainism or the Ājivika faith had well spread in the region by that time and had large followings.

The early history of Buddhism in southern India is still wrapped in considerable obscurity. Like Jainism, Buddhism also appears to have reached South India in the third and second
centuries B.C. While the coming in of Jainism is usually associated with Śrūtakevalin Bhadrabāhu and the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta the advent of Buddhism in South India is associated with Aśoka, the grandson of Chandragupta.

A few traditional accounts of its advent into Ceylon would suggest that the new religion had reached the island and South India even before the days of Aśoka. There is a Ceylonese tradition which says that not only Gautama himself but also the three preceding Buddhas were miraculously transported to Ceylon where arrangements were made for its conversion. Gautama himself is said to have made three visits to the island. "Again it is said that about the time of the Buddha's death one Vijaya started from Bharukacca (Broach) with 700 followers, conquered Ceylon with the slaughter of many of its ancient inhabitants called Yakhas (Yakṣas), settled in the island and spread Buddhism in it. He is mentioned as belonging to the Sākya clan, while his nephew Pāṇḍuvāsudēva married a daughter of the cousin of the Buddha. He himself is said to have married a Pāṇḍya princess." On account of the proximity of the Pāṇḍya country to Ceylon and the matrimonial connection mentioned above, it is believed that people in the Pāṇḍya country would have become familiar with Buddhism, though they might not have changed over to the new faith. It is, however, doubtful if these traditional accounts contained in the Ceylonese chronicles may be treated as historically reliable. It is not possible to believe that the Buddha's activities were extended beyond the Madhyadeśa; the places associated with his life were all in North India namely Rājagṛha, the Magadhan capital, Bodhgaya, Banaras, Śravaṇi, Vaiśali, Nalanda, Pāva and Kuśinagara. "Nor is it likely that Vijaya could have invaded Ceylon and spread Buddhism at such an early period in the island. It is not known from what part of the country Vijaya took his followers to the island. The contemporaneity of Vijaya with the Buddha is not

44. Geiger, Mahāvamsa, 1, 198.
above suspicion. It may be doubted if it was not the deliberate attempt on the part of the chronicles to make Vijaya’s landing in Ceylon synchronise with the pari nirvana of the Buddha. These apart, there is no corroborative evidence on the Tamil side to support the tradition of Vijaya’s marriage with a Pandyya princess.

Likewise there are traditions about the association of the Buddha with the Tamil country. According to Hiuen Tsang “Talopitu had been frequently visited by the Buddha, and king Asoka had erected Topes at the various spots where the Buddha had preached and admitted members into his Order.....Not far from the south of the capital (Kanchi-pu-lo) was a large monastery which was a rendezvous for the most eminent men of the country. It had an Asoka Tope, above hundred feet high where the Buddha had once defeated the Tirthikas by preaching, and had received many into his communion. Near it were traces of a sitting place and exercise-walk of the Four Past Buddhas.”

There cannot be any difficulty in identifying Talopitu with Tondai-mandalam and Kanchi-pu-lo with Kancipuram. But to put any faith in the account of the Chinese pilgrim regarding the Buddha’s activities at Kancipuram is wrong; for, as said above, the activities of the Buddha were confined to the Madhyadesa only. Hence it is difficult to believe that Buddhism had reached the Tamil country and Ceylon even during the life time of the Buddha himself.

Thus since Buddhism could not have reached South India at such an early date, it may be taken that it spread in the Tamil country during the period of the Mauryan Emperor Asoka, the next important epoch in the history of the religion. Traditional accounts of its spread in South India during Asoka’s time contained in the Mahavamsa and the chronicles of Hiuen Tsang are largely confirmed by not only Brahmanical sources but also the Edicts of the Emperor. It is a well-known fact that Asoka occupies a unique position in the history of the spread of

Buddhism in India and abroad and he gave it a character, which it had not attained previously. Whatever may be the effect of his missionary activity for Buddhism in the countries to the west of India, there can be no doubt about the success of his mission within India where, on account of his missionary activity the doctrines of Buddhism "spread as far as northern Bengal in the east, Nepal and Kashmir in the north, Gandhara in the west and Ceylon in the south." 49 Traditions of his association with these regions are found to exist in them; and on account of the geographical contiguity of Ceylon and South India it is possible that what he did for Ceylon with regard to the spread of Buddhism should have influenced South India also.

According to the traditions contained in the Mahāvamsa there appears to have been close relationship between the mainland and Ceylon from very early times. The Mahāvamsa would have us believe that Devanāṃpiya Tissa, 50 the King of Ceylon who was on friendly terms with Aśoka, although they had not met, sent to the Mauryan Emperor "a complimentary mission bearing wonderful treasures." Aśoka who was obviously pleased with the mission said that "he had taken refuge in the law of Buddha and advised the King of Ceylon to find salvation in the same way." He is also said to have sent to the Ceylonese King rich presents including royal insignia and Tissa was crowned for a second time, which probably signifies that he became disciple and vassal of Aśoka. 51 Such close association and intercourse between the Mauryan Emperor and the Ceylonese King made it easy for the former to send religious missions to the island and convert its King and people to Buddhism.

Again according to the Mahāvamsa Aśoka held in the seventeenth year of his coronation the Third Buddhist Council at Pāṭaliputra under the presidency of the monk Moggaliputta Tissa (Upagupta in the North Indian texts) and at its end "he sent forth theras one here and one there to various countries." It is said that he sent Mahendra with Rāṣṭriya, Utiya, Sarupala

50. With this title may be compared the Mauryan Emperor's title Devanāṃpiya. Apparently the Ceylonese King took that title in imitation of Aśoka.
and Bhadrasara to Lankā (Ceylon). The Mahavamsa says that Maha Ariśṭa, the maternal uncle of Moggaliputta Tissa and a great statesman of the day went at the request of his nephew to the court of Aśoka and brought a Bodhi tree along with Mahinda Sangamitra. These traditions are supported by the Pali canonical work, the Parivaraṇa which was compiled about the beginning of the Christian era.

The Ceylonese chronicles would have us believe that Buddhism was received in Ceylon direct from Magadha as may be seen from the account that Mahendra miraculously flew to the island in the air. It is strange that the chronicles are silent about the Aśokan missions to the Tamil country. This points to the fact that the Ceylonese monks were anxious to record their direct relations with the homeland of Buddhism and Aśoka. As Oldenberg shrewdly observes "the story of Mahinda and his sister seems to have been invented for the purpose of possessing a history of the Buddhist institutions in the island and to connect it with the most distinguished person conceivable—the great Aśoka." It seems that such accounts of the direct relations between Magadha and Ceylon are too fantastic and improbable. It is more likely that Buddhism reached Ceylon through the Deccan and South India with which both the Mauryan emperors and Ceylon had contacts, though it is not improbable that the Aśokan missions were more successful in the island than in the Tamil country. A tradition recorded by Hiuen Tsang associates a Buddhist mission under Mahendra with Malaya below Drāvida, i.e., the Tamraparpi country before it went to Simhaṇa. Referring to the place he says:

"(Here) some follow the true doctrine, others are given to heresy. They do not esteem learning much, but are wholly given to commercial gain. There are the ruins of many old

52. Ibid., pp. 139.40.
53. See B. M. Barua, Inscriptions of Aśoka, Pt. ii, p. 236. The traditions about Moggaliputta Tissa's efforts to establish Buddhist faith in Ceylon during the time of Aśoka contained in the Dipavamsa are indirectly confirmed by the records on the relic caskets of Kōtiputta Kassapa Gotta, Kōjiniputta Muljhima and Gotiputta Dundubbissara from Sāṇchi and Sonari (J.R.A S., 1905).
54. Introduction to the Vinaya Piṭaka.
convents, but only the walls are preserved and there are few religious followers. There are many hundred Deva (Brahmanical) temples and a multitude of heretics, mostly belonging to the Nirgranthas (Jains)."

"Not far to the east of this city is an old sanghārāma (monastery) of which the vestibule and court are covered with wild shrubs. This was built by Mahendra the younger brother of Aśoka Rājā. To the east of this is a sūpā, the lofty walls of which are buried in the earth...This was built by Aśoka Rājā." 65 Thus these traditions preserved in later writings show that Mahendra had something to do with the spread of Buddhism in the Tamil country. In fact the Ceylonese chronicles give such singularly onesided and often exaggerated account of the close and direct contacts between the island and Pātaliputra that one is not able to get a correct idea of the part played by Mahendra in the spread of the religion in South India.

Whatever that may be, it seems probable that Mahendra did something for the spread of Buddhism in the Tamil country. Probably he stayed in the region for some time, most probably at Nāgapaṭṭinam, which was an important centre of Buddhism from early times. This may be inferred from the fact that Hiuen Tsang mentions a monastery built by Mahendra near Tanjavur. 66 Later traditions affirm that there was a Buddhist monastery at Nāgapaṭṭinam which was called Dharmaśoka Maharāja vihāra, apparently named after Aśoka." The great Śaiva revivalist Sambandar mentions the place as a centre of Buddhism." Later still the smaller Leyden grant of Kulātunga I mentions a Rājendra sāḷapperumpaḷḷi as also some Buddhist temples at the place." Marco Polo who visited Nāgapaṭṭinam mentions a sūpā at the place." All these point to the fact that

57. See B. M. Barua, Aśoka and his Inscriptions, p. 352.
60. Haour Cordier, Marco Polo, p. 114.
the east coast of the Tamil country, particularly the Nāgapataṭi-
nam area had come under the influence of Buddhism during the
days of Aśoka, probably on account of the work of missionaries
like Mahendra.

The edicts of Aśoka are an invaluable source of information
for a study of the life and activities of the Emperor; and but
for them, it should be very difficult to recover his true history
particularly in view of the fact that “myths and legends have
freely and luxuriantly grown round him especially in the tropi-
cal climate of Ceylon.” These edicts which are incised on
rocky surfaces and exquisitely polished pillars of stone contain
largely the Emperor’s messages and sermons to his people and
record his many sided activities. Some of them record his work
in connection with the spread of Dharma inside and outside his
empire. Of them Rock Edicts II and XIII are of particular value
on account of the details they contain about his religious missions
to South India and Ceylon. In Edict II he records:

“Throughout the domain of King Priyadarśin, Beloved of
the Gods, so also in the bordering territories such as Cōla,
Pāṇḍya, Satiyaputra, Keralaiputra, as far (south) as Tamraparnī
(that of) the Greek King named Antiochos, or even (those of the
Greek) kings who are the neighbours of the said Antiochus—
everywhere King Priyadarśin, Beloved of the Gods has arranged
for two kinds of medical treatment, that for men and that for
animals. The medicinal herbs that are suitable for men and for
animals have been caused to be supplied and planted wheresoever
these are not to be found. The medicinal roots and fruits too,
have been caused to be supplied and planted wheresoever
these are lacking. On the roads wells (and the like) have
been caused to be excavated and shade trees planted for the
enjoyment of men and animals.”

The edicts mention the kingdoms and peoples outside
Aśoka’s dominion as distinguished from the territories and

62. See B. M. Barua, Inscriptions of Aśoka, II. Pt. ii. P. 180. also Hult-
(1957), p. 40; N. A. Nikam and Richard Mc Keon, (Ed), The Edicts
of Aśoka, p. 27.
peoples within them. The terms used to denote the former are anta, pracaṃta or pralyanta meaning ruling peoples of the bordering states which were obviously contiguous to his own empire while the territories and people within his empire are referred to by the term vijita, which show that they were conquered by him or his predecessors and hence formed an integral part of his empire. To the group of independent kingdoms and people outside the pale of the Mauryan Empire belonged territories of the Cōja, Pāṇḍya, Satiyaputra and Keralaputra as far (south) as Tāmraparṇi.

There cannot be any difficulty in identifying this group of five territorial units and peoples. This first independent territory to the south of the Mauryan Empire was that of the Cōḷas or Cōḷas. Their northern boundary appears to have been coterminous with the southern boundary of Aśoka’s Empire. It is possible to form an idea of the southern boundary of Aśoka’s Empire by a study of the distribution of his edicts. A careful study of them would show that while the Pillar Edicts of the Emperor are found in important towns and cities in the Empire, his Rock Edicts are found near the borders in different directions. In the south are found three groups of Minor Rock Edicts on hills on the Chenna Heggari river at three different places namely Siddhapura (supposed to be Asilā of Minor Rock Edict I), Jatinga Rāmeśvara and Brahmagiri, all in the Chitaldrug district in the Mysore State, a version of the Rock Edicts and Minor Rock Edicts at Yarragudi in the Kurnool District, a version of the Minor Rock Edict at Rajula Mandagiri, a place near Yarragudi itself and a version of Minor Rock Edict I (which mentions the Emperor by his name), all in Andhra Pradesh. If these be taken as indicating the approximate southern boundary of the Mauryan Empire under Aśoka it may be marked by a line drawn from the west coast near 14° of latitude and reaching the east coast near 13° of latitude. V. A. Smith felt that “the southern frontier of the empire of Aśoka may be described approximately by a line drawn from the mouth of the Peṇṇār river near Nellore on the Eastern coast through Cuddapah and to the south of Chitaldrug to the river Kalyāṇapuri on the west coast.”

64. Early History of India, p. 163.
farther south and included the Tondaimandalam area also. Such a possibility is borne out by Ptolemy. His description of the Tamil country would seem to show that there were at that time two Cola kingdoms with two capitals, one in the south with Orathoura "the royal city of Sornagas" (Cōdanāgās) and the other in the north with its capital at Arkatos." 65 Orathoura and Arkatos have been identified respectively with Uragapura (Uraiyūr) in the modern Tiruchirapalli Municipal limits and the other with Arcot in the North Arcot District. 66 But Arkatos may with greater probability be identified with Arkadu near modern Tanjavur. 67 If the identification is correct, and if there is any basis for the later traditions which associate Asoka with Kāncipuram, it may be taken that the Tondaimandalam region formed part of the Mauryan Empire and extended up to the R. Peṇnār or Gaḍīlam in the South Arcot District." 68

The next piece of territory said to have been outside the Mauryan Empire was that of the Paṇḍyas which lay to the south-southwest of the Cola territory. Ptolemy refers to the Paṇḍyas as Pandinoi and their capital as 'Modoura.' Obviously there was only one Paṇḍya kingdom as may be inferred from the fact that while Ptolemy mentions two Cola kingdoms, he mentions only one Paṇḍya kingdom. In some versions of Minor Rock Edict II, the Paṇḍyas are mentioned in plural which would show that the term denotes either the country over which the Paṇḍyan dynasty ruled or a ruling people. 69 The exact boundary

65. See Cunningham, Ancient Geography of India, p. 539. See also Caldwell, Comparative Grammar, p. 93.


67. See for a discussion of the question by the author his forthcoming book Kāncipuram in Early South Indian History.

68. In some versions of the Minor Rock Edicts Cōga is mentioned in plural; and its significance may be explained by the existence of two Cōla Kingdoms. B. M. Barua suggests that the Cōla country had at that time rather a republican or national than a monarchical form of government. (See his Inscriptions of Asoka, Vol. II, p. 231; also H. C. Ray Chaudhuri, Political History of Ancient India, p. 271.)

of the Pāṇḍya territory is hard to fix, though it is possible that it could have included the present districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari in the Madras State.

The Keraḷaputras mentioned in the Aśokan inscriptions were obviously the Cēras who ruled over the region to the west of the Kingdoms of the Pāṇḍyas and the Cōḷas. Their capital was Vanji, the identification of which place has been a subject of keen controversy among scholars, some identifying it with Tiruvangaikkalam on the River Periyār and some with Karur in the Tiruchirapalli district. In the solution of the problem two new inscriptions have also to be taken into account. A Brahmi inscription near Pugalur in the Karur taluk mentions one Kośipan Ātana. The word reminds one of Ātana, a name borne by a few Cēra Kings. A Cōḷa inscription mentions Karuvūr alias Vanjimānagār in the Vēngāla nādu a sub-division of Vīra-śōla maṇḍalam.

The next country mentioned in Aśoka's inscriptions as being independent of him and outside his empire is that of the Satiyaputa (or Satiyaputra). The identification of this country is again a subject of much difference of opinion among scholars. R. G. Bhandarkar was inclined to identify it with the coastal region 'situated along the Western ghats and the Konkan coast below' on the ground that 'along the westernmost portion of the Deccan tableland we have Mahratha, Kayastha, and Brahman families bearing the surname satpute which cannot but be treated as a modern transformation of Asoka's Satiyaputa'.

S. K. Aiyangar treated Satiyaputra as a collective name of the various matriarchal communities like the Tulus and the Nayars of Malabar and located them in the region north of Cochin. B. M. Barua is of the view that from the location of Aśoka's Rock and Minor Rock Edicts, "it may be inferred that the country of Satiyaputa or Satiyaputra lay along the west coast of South India to the south of Sopara and the Chitaldrug

71. Ibid., No. 335.
72. See B. M. Barua, op. cit., p. 234.
District of Mysore, to the west of Mysore and the north of Keralaputra. 73a

K. G. Sessa Aiyar is inclined to identify on philological grounds the Atiyamāns of the Sāngam age with the Satiyaputra of Aśoka's inscriptions. He says: "the initial a (in Atiyamān) becomes ha, which again becomes sa in Prākt; and man is abbreviation for maga which means putra; and thus Atiyamān becomes Satiyaputra on the analogy of Cēraman equals Kēralaputra...... The identification here suggested of Atiyamān with Satiyaputra satisfactorily accounts for the presence of the particle s in the name appearing in Aśoka's edict." 74 Considering also the political set up of the Tamil country during the period the suggestion of Sessa Aiyar seems to be acceptable. In identifying the Satiyaputras, the order in which the South Indian powers outside the Mauryan Empire under Aśoka are mentioned has to be taken into account.

The Tamil country may be vertically divided into two halves, the east and the west. In the former are mentioned first the Cōlas and then the Pāṇḍyas. In the latter are mentioned first the Satiyaputras and then the Kēralaputras. In the same way as the Cōlas were to the north of the Pāṇḍyas in the eastern half, the Satiyaputras must have been to the north of the Kēralaputras in the western half. If that be so, it is not improbable that the Satiyaputras were the same as the Adigaimāns of Tagaḏur, who had an important place in the political set up of the Tamil country obviously from the days of the Mauryas, themselves. Probably they were the same as the Maḷavars, an ancient tribe in the Tamil country, as may be gleaned from the references to them in early Tamil literature. 75

Thus the edicts of Aśoka under consideration definitely show that as part of his activities for the promotion of Dharma, the

74. Cera kings of the Sāngam Age, p. 18; also B.S.O.A.S., XII, (1948) pp 135-7 and 146-7 for a discussion of the question by Burrow.
75. For instance Maḷavar Perumagan (puram, 88.90). See Journal of Indian History, Vol. XXXII. 1954, pp. 229-32; See also XLII, 1964. pp. 877-85 for an examination of the question by N. Subrahmanyan.
Mauryan Emperor undertook also the provision of amenities for the material comfort of man and beast not only within his dominions, but also among others, the independent kingdoms and peoples bordering on his empire (antas, pracantas or pratyantas) namely the Cōlas, Paṇḍyas, Kēraḷaputras and Satiyaputras and Tāmraparṇī (Ceylon) and the neighbouring kingdom of Antiyaka (Antiochus). And on account of such close contact with the Tamil country and Aśoka’s efforts, it is not improbable that Buddhism spread in the area during his time. His activities connected with the spread of the religion in the Tamil country are also suggested by some pieces of literary traditions. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang connects Aśoka with Kaṇcipuram and records that he noticed at the place a stūpa about 100 feet high built by the Mauryan Emperor as also the remains of an old monastery, built by his brother Mahendra on the east side of the capital. Again according to some old Pallava charters one of the mythical ancestors of the Pallava kings of Kaṇci is said to have borne the name Aśokavarma, which is obviously “a modification of the name of the ancient Mauryan king Aśoka.” This is further supported by the evidence of the Rajatarangini containing a traditional account of the history of Kashmir. Taking these pieces of evidence into consideration, it is not improbable that Aśoka had something to do with Kaṇci and the Tondaimanḍa-lam region, or at least his father Bindusāra, during whose time, the Mauryan Empire appears to have been tried to be expanded far into the Tamil country. Whatever may be the real nature and the

76. Again Aśoka’s missionary activities outside his empire are mentioned in his thirteenth rock edict. Giving an account of the measures he took for the spread of Dharmaṇijaya, he says: “And what is Dharmaṇijaya, moral conquest, is considered by His Sacred Majesty both here (in his dominions) and among all the frontier people even to the extent of 600 yojanas where (are) the Yona king Antiyachus by name and beyond that Antiyachus, the four kings named Ptolemy, Antiagoras, Magas and Alexander, below the Cōlas, Paṇḍyas as far as Tāmraparṇī. (Hultzsch, op. cit., pp. 69, 70.)


78. See also Journal of Indian History, XIV, p. 149.

79. The possibility of the invasion, conquest and probable temporary occupation of at least parts of the Tamil country by Bindusāra about 278 B.C. is suggested by the evidence of Taranatha, the
actual period of the occupation of the Tamil country by the Mauryas, Aśoka's name became closely associated with Kāñcipuram.

Taking all these pieces of evidence into account it may be taken that Mahendra and the Buddhist missionaries who went to Ceylon could have embarked for the island from the east coast of the Tamil country, probably from Kāñcipuram or Nāgapaṭṭi-nam, though Ceylon had also possibly direct and close connections with Magadha. It is equally possible that South India received Buddhism direct through the missionaries of Aśoka rather than from Ceylon, though on account of the close proximity of the Tamil country to the neighbouring island and the cultural relations between them from immemorial times, the Buddhist activity in the mainland could have been influenced in some ways by the monks of the order in Ceylon.

Like the Jains and the Buddhists, the Ājivikas also appear to have penetrated into the Tamil country by the third or second century B.C. Considerable sections of the population seem to have been attracted to this faith which had taken a deep root in the country and had attained good progress apparently with large patronage. This becomes clear from the evidence of classical Tamil literature and Tamil inscriptions. The Silappadikāram mentions Mānāykan, father of the heroine Kanṭakki, on hearing of the tragedy and the death of his daughter of Madurai "gave away his wealth in religious gifts and adopted dharmag in the presence of the Ājivikas like sages engaged in penance of a high order." 80 The Maṇimēkalai also refers to the leaders of the faith. The heroine Maṇimēkalai, after many adventures in the course

Tibetan historian who says that the Emperor overthrew sixteen kingdoms lying between sea and sea, the Hathigumpha Inscription of Kharavela which says that he (Kharavela) dismembered in his eleventh regnal year the tramiradesa sanghatam (the league of the Tamil which had been in existence for 113 years) and the Tamil traditions recorded by Māmulanār. (See K. P. Jayaswal, An Imperial History of India, p. 16; Ep. Ind., Vol. XX, pp. 86-9; S. K. Aiyangar, Beginnings of South Indian History, pp. 87 and 90 and A Comprehensive History of India, Vol. II, Mauryas and Satavahanas p. 500)

80. Silappadikāram, Canto. XXVII, Nīrppadaikādai ll. 89.90; Kaṭavular, kaḷattu annālam perumattu Aiivakar (saints) with the mien of Gods, (Ājivikas performing severe penance. Also Tr. by V.R.R. Dikshitar, p. 308.
of her religious quest arrives at Vañji, the Cēra capital, where she finds many teachers of different religious sects among which the Ājivikas were one. 81 Besides, the Nilakēsi, a Jaina work of the eighth or ninth century written on the model of the Maṇimēkalai, and the Sivajñanasāsityar of the thirteenth century also contain references to the doctrines of the Ājivikas. Further, an inscription of the eighth regnal year of a Narasimha Potavarman in characters of the eighth century A. D. found in the Kāṇakū Amman temple at Kāṇchipuram mentions the Ājivika dārsān and the temple of Arivar the All-knowing. 82

81. Canto. XXVI Samayakāṇahkārtāmāmar kṣetra kāṭāvar 11. 108-165; also S. K. Aiyangar, Maṇimēkalai in its Historical Setting, pp. 193-4. The teacher who explained the doctrines of this sect is called there “the elder (Pūraṇan) knowing the book of the Ājivikas.” (1.108—Aṣṭavāka nīl agīndra Pūraṇan.)

82. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 360 of 1954-55; Rep., p. 16 Indian Archaeology, a Review, 1954-55, p 28; The information about the Ājivikas is very fragmentary. The first connected account of them is contained in an article by Horne in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. The next work on the subject is by B. M. Barua, published in the Department of Letters (Calcutta University Vol. II. pp. 1-80). The latest full-length study of them is by A. L. Basham (The History and the Doctrines of the Ājivikas). With the exception of the work of Basham the studies of the other scholars appear to be based mainly on the references to the sect in the Buddhist and Jaina source in Pāli and Prakṛt and occasionally in the Sanskrit sources of later periods. Dr. Basham is the first scholar to have utilised the information available in some of the Tamil sources in his study on the history and doctrines of the Ājivikas.

Makkhali Gosāla is considered the founder of this sect. (The name Makkhali Gosāla is found in the Pāli Canon. In Buddhist Sanskrit works it usually becomes Maskarin Gosāla. But the Mahāvastu and some other works have the form Gosalaha putra and Gosala putra. The Jaina scriptures reverse the two names and mention him as Gosala Mankhaliputta. In the Tamil books his name is given as Markali.) But there are numerous indications to show that ascetics referred to as Ājivikas existed before the time of Makkhali Gosāla and that the Ājivika order preserved recollections of prophets who preceded him. Evidently Gosāla was their greatest leader who reorganised the faith and gave it a firm footing.

Makkhali Gosāla is believed to have been a contemporary of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. The Jaina work Bhagavatiśītra mentions that Gosāla was a disciple in asceticism of Mahāvīra and that both of them were living together and undertaking peregrinations. They were together for six years, (or seven years according to another source), when they parted company owing to differences.
The earliest datable and epigraphical reference to the Ājīvikas is found in the inscriptions of Aśoka. The seventh Pillar

Thereafter Gosāla is said to have claimed himself as a Tīrthankara and lived as a religious teacher. He is referred to in the Pali texts of the Buddhists with the stock formula applied to the teachers of all the six heretical sects: as the leader of an order (Ganadāriya) well-known, famous, the founder of a sect (Tīrthakaro), respected as a saint (śāhī sammaio) revered by many people, a homeless wanderer of long standing (cirababaji to) and advanced in years.

The names of Nanda vaccha and Kisa Sankiccha are linked with that of Makkhali Gosāla in various contests of Gosāla, and occupying an honoured place in the hagiology of the sect. Two other names Purāṇa Kassapa and Pakudha Kacciyana are also found mentioned in Buddhist literature in relation to this sect. While Purāṇa figures prominently in Tamil literature Pakudha, whose other cognomen or surname is spelt variously as Kacana, Kaccanyo, Katiyano (meaning thereby Kityayana), is not specifically mentioned in Tamil literature; but his seven-element theory is recognised and referred to in the Śivaśajnashativāyr. The last two were probably the persons who had finalised and placed the finished doctrine of the sect on a firm footing.

The Ājīvikas had a canon of sacred texts in which their doctrines were codified. In the Tamil sources this is referred to as Ācivakānūl (the book of the Ājīvikas or Markalinūl (the book of Markali, i.e., Makkhali Gosāla). It is also known as onpatu kair, or navakair (the Nine Rays in Tamil). But in the Bhagavati Sūtra it is said that their canon consisted of the eight-fold Mahānimitta (i.e. aṣṭamahānimittita) extracted from the pūrvas with the two Maggas (Ubbhayamarga the two-fold path) making the total ten. It is said that these were extracted by six diśācaras (whose names are also given there). When they visited Makkhali Gosāla in the twenty-fourth year of his asceticism when he was staying at Sravasti (Sovatthi) examining hundreds of opinions, they were approved by Gosāla.

The names of the eight āngas of the mahānimitta are the following:

1. Diwāya (of the divine).
2. Autpatam (of portents).
3. Antarikṣam (of the sky).
4. Bhūman (of the earth).
5. Angam (of the body).
6. Svaram (of the sound).
7. Laksanam (of characteristics) and
8. Vyāñjanam (of indication).

In one place suvina (suapna or dream) is found substituted for the first ānga, i.e., diwāya. It will be clear that these are systems of prognostication. There are many references in literature that the Ājīvikas often acted as astrologers or readers of omens. (The
Edict issued in the twenty-seventh year of his coronation describes the imperial policy for the propagation of Dharma and especially the duties of the officers of public Morale (Dharma mahāmaitra). These officers were of four different divisions and busy with different religious groups. (a) Buddhist Sangha, (b) Brāhmaṇaśas, (and) Ājivikas (Bābhaneśu Ājivikas) (c) Nirgranthas or Jainas and (d) various other sects. These show the influence and condition of the Ājivika community in those days. The Ājivikas appear to have developed as an influential religious community or sect like the Jainas and the Buddhists. Again the inscriptions in the artificial caves in the Barabar hills, fifteen miles north of Gaya mention the dedication of the caves to the Ājivikas. The nearby hill of Nāgarjuni contains three similar caves, which were

Jaina scriptures explicitly forbid the Jaina Bhikkhu from practising these arts. But they were practising them. Kalakārīya is said to have learnt these mahānimittas from the Ājivikas. And an inscription from Sāvita Belgoḍa states that Bhadrabha, knowing the eight fold mahānimittas, seeing past, present and future, foretold in Ujjayini a calamity of twelve years’ duration).

The two maggas are said to be those of song and dance, and very likely represent texts containing directions for religious songs and ritual dances respectively.

The Purvas from which the Ājivika scriptures were supposed to have been extracted represent, according to the Jainas, the Purvas, the earliest scriptures of this sect, which are however lost. These Purvas are said to be fourteen in number, and only later redactions of the same are now available. The titles of these lost Purvas of the Jaina tradition do not bear any resemblance to those of the Ājivikas. But it is not unlikely that the Purvas from which the scriptures of both the religions had been framed were one and the same forming the parental stock. Most probably the word Purva in the text should be interpreted not in the specialised Jaina sense, but merely as past traditions.

From the available evidence it is seen that there were similarities, sometimes very striking both in the doctrines and practices of these two sects. This charge of plagiarism is a further indication of the close connection between Ājivikism and Jainism in their origin.

84. Ibid., p. 136 11. 15-16.
85. Ibid., pp. 181 ff.
dedicated to the Ājīvikas by Aśoka’s grandson and successor Daśaratha.  

The Ājīvika faith appears to have spread in the south even from its inception. Reference has been made earlier to the mention made in the Mahāvamsa of the consecration of dwellings for the Ājīvikas along side of the Nirgranthas by Pāṇḍukabhaya (B.C. 377-307). If this account is to be believed the faith had reached the island by at least the fourth century B.C., obviously through South India and the Tamil country.  

86. It is to be noted in this connection that though these inscriptions are all well-preserved, the word Ājīvika is found mutilated deliberately. Still the word can be read and restored with certainty in spite of this wanton attempt in later days.

87. I have also consulted the relevant portion of the thesis Jainism in South India (unpublished) by R. Champakalakshmi for writing this section.
The date of these Brahmi label inscriptions has also baffled scholars. The inscriptions have been conjecturally assigned to the third century B.C., based mainly on the shape of the characters employed in writing them. The script of these records, as has been said earlier, resembles in many respects the characters employed in the Ceylon cave inscriptions of almost the same period on the one hand and the alphabets of the inscriptions found at Bhattripulu on the other. Judging largely from the general appearance of the letters of the Bhattripulu writing, Bühler thinks that of the ten inscriptions from the place the last one belongs to the same time as those of Asoka, while the first nine are also probably only a few decades later than Asoka's edicts. His opinion is that they are on the whole much more closely allied to the epigraphs of the third century B.C. than to those of the second and that they cannot be placed later than 200 B.C., but may even be a little earlier. From a close study of the records, he came to the conclusion that during the third century B.C. several well-marked varieties of the Southern Mauryan alphabet must have existed with a perfectly worked-out system. In some respects they were radically different from the Asokan ones, though it may be reasonably supposed that they were contemporaneous with the edicts of the Mauryan Emperor. But the system seen in the Southern Mauryan alphabet should have had a long history, and could not have sprung up in a short time.¹

K.V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the conclusion of Bühler seems to receive strong support from these Brahmi epigraphs of the Pāṇḍya country under study. He draws pointed attention to the new symbols designed to represent alphabetic sounds not found in Sanskrit but only in Tamil, and also the forms of the two letters ya and ma as found in these inscriptions which have been examined earlier. As regards the forms

of the letter *ma*, "it differs markedly both from the Aśokan and the Bhaṭṭiprōḷu types, and consists of a broad tube opening upwards with a horizontal (cross) bar inserted almost in the middle of the tube. This formation of the letter leaves on one the impression that it must be the original form from which the Bhaṭṭiprōḷu and Aśokan *ma*-s were developed and that these inscriptions in the Pāṇḍya country might be much older. Though such a view would be quite legitimate, I am rather inclined to think that the southerns had retained the original form, while it changed almost into a semi-circle with two short strokes in the Mauryan and Bhaṭṭiprōḷu types, the difference in the latter two being that one is topsy-turvy to the other. Judging from the Bhaṭṭiprōḷu form of this letter, Dr. Bühler was inclined to the belief that the southern *ma* should have originally consisted of a circle or semi-circle with two strokes below and that the Mauryan form must have been obtained by turning it upside down. A careful comparison of the three forms would rather indicate that the earliest form should have been a tube with cross bar in the middle as seen in the Paṇcapāṇḍavamalai epigraphs and the developments of this are the ones found in the Mauryan and the Bhaṭṭiprōḷu inscriptions."

It will be seen from the above that he, along with Krishna Sastri and others, was inclined to assign a rather very early date for these Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country.

It must, however, be remembered that all this was written very many years before the Brāhmī inscriptions at Pugaliyur and Māmaṅḍur as also the inscribed potsherds at Arikameṭu near Pondicherry and Uraiyur (Tiruchirapalli) were obtained. The palaeographical chart of select letters from early South Indian cavern inscriptions and the inscribed potsherds from Arikameṭu given here would enable one to make a comparative study of the letters.

3. See fig. No. 12.
4. The writings on the Arikameṭu potsherds which have close resemblance to the script of the cavern inscriptions under study appear to be different from the graffiti scratched or incised into the slip or any other surface treatment of the pottery usually associated with the megalithic culture. The latter were marks
The excavations at Arikamēdu are of more than ordinary interest to student of South Indian History. “For the first time Arikamēdu provides a firm datum line from which the classification of pre-medieval South Indian Cultures can begin.” It has thrown much unexpected light on the palaeography of the Brahmi script. The following is said about it:—

1. There is general similarly between the characters of the Arikamēdu graffiti and the cavern inscriptions of the Tamil country. All these letters in them have practically the same shape except two, ma and ra. Ma in the Māmaṇṭur inscription conjecturally assigned to the third century B.C. is of the angular variety, but at Arikamēdu it is a loop with a cross-bar as in the Sittanavasāl and other cavern inscriptions. The letter ra is just a straight line at Arikamēdu and in the cavern inscriptions at Madurai and Tirunelveli districts, while it is a slightly zigzag line in the Māmaṇṭur record. The other letters have practically the same shape in both.

The letter la has a more circular form in the cavern inscriptions, whilst at Arikamēdu it has the almost modern open form. This would suggest a later date for the Arikamēdu graffiti.

The characters of the Arikamēdu graffiti may be closely compared to those of the Bhaṭṭiprolu Brahmi inscriptions which, according to Bühler, may be assigned to the “time immediately after Asoka or about 200 B.C.”

They may be compared also to the Hathibāḍa and Ghasūṇḍī inscriptions which have been assigned by Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar of different types which were once considered to be either potters’ marks or owners’ marks and now as auspicious signs. Yazdani thought that some of the graffiti represent characters like the Egyptian hieratic script used to express ideas. According to him “75 percent of them are identical with the alphabetical signs given by Evans in his Comparative Table showing the relation in Cretan and Aegean, Epypto Libyan and Libya writings.” (Annual Report of the Archaeological Department, H. E. H. The Nizam’s Dominions, 1915-16 and 1917-17, pp. 9-10 and 5-8 respectively; also “Megalithic Remains of the Deccan, New Feature of them” Journal of the Hyderabad Archaeological Society, 1917, pp. 56-79.) But the writings on the potsherds at Arikamēdu and Ugaityūr are in the Brahmi alphabet.
to the beginning of the first century B.C. Slight differences are seen here:

While in the Hathibāḍa and Ghosūndi inscriptions the arms of a on the left are a little round, in the Arikameḍu graffiti they are angular;

While in the former the cross-bar of ḫa is found above the centre of the vertical line, in the latter it is at or a little below the centre.

The bottom of ḫa is a little angular in the former, while it is fully round in the latter.

The letter ma has a more developed shape in the former than in the latter.

The letter va has a flattened base in the former.⁵

These differences, as also a comparison of the Arikameḍu inscriptions with other Brahmi inscriptions, particularly those found in the north, would incline one to take them to belong to the first or second century B.C. But the date of the pottery at the place is indicated by its association with dated antiquities in the first century A.D. or a near date. This would suggest a discrepancy between the palaeographical and archaeological evidence. But the reason for this however is not far to seek. In the words of Dr. N. P. Chakravarti it may be explained as follows:—

"The script of the Arikameḍu pottery and the early rock-shelters of the Madura and Tinnevelly Districts seems to be more akin to the ancient Drāvidī script than the regular Brāhmi as found in the edicts of Aśoka and other early inscriptions. We also know that the Drāvīḍi script must have separated from the main stock of Brāhmi much earlier than the time of Aśoka, at the latest in the fifth century B.C. (Bühler, 'Indian Palaeography' Indian Antiquary XXXIII, appendix, p. 8.), This is undoubtedly the reason why so many archaic forms are noticed in the few inscriptions so far known in the Drāvīḍi script. The development of forms after separation could not be so fast in

⁵ Ep. Ind., XXII, pp. 199 ff. and XVI, pp. 25 ff. See also Ancient India. (Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India) No. 2, p. 111.
Drāviḍi as in the regular Brāhmī, which continued to be used throughout the whole of India. If we bear this point in mind, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, though the script of the Arikameḍu graffiti appears to be similar to the script of the Brāhmī inscriptions of the first and second centuries B.C., it actually should be relegated to a later period. If this assumption is correct then the so-called discrepancy between the palaeographic and the archaeological evidence would seem to disappear."

Apart from this, the language of these cavern inscriptions has also to be taken into account. It has been seen above that these inscriptions are in the Tamil language. It is recognised among scholars that Tamil had a highly developed literary form in the early centuries of the Christian era, if not earlier. Hence it must have had a fairly long anterior background. Its beginnings cannot be easily determined. They may probably be traced back to about 500 B.C. and from that time onwards it must have existed or grown as a pālais, to be possible for the language to reach high efflorescence in the Sangam literature, usually assigned by scholars from the second to the fourth century A.D. Considered from that point of view, these label inscriptions may be assigned to the period before the commencement of the 'Sangam age.'

These considerations would push the latest limit to the date of the Brāhmī records of the Tamil country to the first century A.D. or near date. But the earliest limit would still remain the third century B.C. or the period of Asoka from whose time only the lithic records of India have become available and in whose time emissaries were sent to different parts of the country to propagate his Dharma. And a careful study of these earliest records from the Tamil country would point that not all of them belong to the same period. They distinctly fall into two groups, those following the Drāviḍi style of marking the medial vowel a both long and short, and those not following that style. Some of the inscriptions like those found at Marugāltalai, Sittannavāgal Uṇḍankal etc. follow the principle of the Bhāṭṭiprāḷu records.

6. *Ancient India*, 2, pp. 109-11. It may be noted in this connection that the Bhāṭṭiprāḷu records have been assigned to a period much later than 200 B.C. by Dr. D. C. Sircar. (*Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 215, n. 1.)
in indicating the medial vowel a both short and long with one
and two strokes to the right of the consonant character, treating
the same as a basic or pure vowelless one, while some others
like those found at Māmanḍōr, Pugalīyur, Kunnakkuḍi etc.
do not follow the above principle, but write in the ordinary way
like the Brāhmī records of the areas where the standard value is
assigned to the symbols. It is not very likely that these two
varieties could have been in use contemporaneously. The should
be assigned to different periods, one following the other.

It is rather difficult to declare unequivocally which of the
two is earlier. Arguments might be brought forward on both
sides in support of the respective positions. But one thing is
certain. At whichever time it might have been introduced, the
new method of the Drāvīḍī style in indicating the medial vowel a
both short and long, had been a short lived one. This becomes
evident from the earliest inscriptions recovered after these Brāhmī
records and available in the Grantha, Tamil and Veṭṭeluttu scripts
which do not follow the innovation, but are written in the
ordinary way. And even among the Brāhmī records also, those
found at Pugalīyur which may be considered the latest and
assigned to a period coeval with that of the Arikamēdu graffiti
also follow this principle. As such it may be possibly concluded
that (1) these records may be assigned ranging from the third
century B.C. to the second century A.D., and (2) such of the records
as follow the Drāvīḍī style in indicating the medial vowel a both
short and long are earlier, while those not following that principle
are later.'

7. Ahmad Hasan Dani examines the date of these inscriptions and
says: ‘The inscription from Śittannavāsal is unique in South India
in that it copies certain northern letters which are not known in
Amaravati. The most remarkable is the form of la which occurs
in the Saka Kshatrapa records of Mathura. The forms of na, pa
and ya are also remarkable. Hence this inscription cannot be
dated earlier than the first half of the first century A.D.

‘The other cave inscriptions are cruder in workmanship, but
some of the forms are related to the Śittannavāsal inscriptions.
The comparable letters are va, la, ma, ya, la, na, ta, cha and ka.
Ma is of a new form in these inscriptions resembling a U with
a cross-bar in the middle. This will be called hereafter Drāvīdian
ma. This form has been found in Sanchi. These inscriptions are
not far removed in time from the Śittannavāsal inscription, though
they are cruder in workmanship, and their date must fall in the first half of the first century A.D."

"Dani claims that his dating of these cave inscriptions receives confirmation from the evidence supplied by the excavated materials at Arikamādu and says: "There, some inscribed potsherds have been found in datable strata. Even if we do not rely on the evidence of the stratification, as dated by Wheeler, these inscriptions may also be dated on palaeographical grounds. They fall into two groups. The first which we call Arikamādu I has legends in Tamil, and the script, though crudely scratched on the pots, agrees with that seen in the caves of the Madura and Tinneveli districts. In Arikamādu II only one potsherd is illustrated, which reads yakhamitrasya and not yakhamitrara, as is given in the published report.

"The importance of this inscription lies not only in the use of a northern language but also in the script which is quite different from that of the other potsherds. Obviously the difference is due to the persons who made the pots—the single piece of Arikamādu II was inscribed by a potter who knew some Sanskrit, if only very poorly and who probably came from the north, while the others were made and inscribed by the local southerners. This probably accounts for the marked difference in the scripts followed. The southerner follows the crude style of the cave inscriptions, while the northerner copies forms that can be traced from the records of the Mathura Kshatrapas (note especially the letters ḫa, ma, and ya). Here we get the southern scripts in the first century A.D.; dated both by the palaeography as well as by the other materials produced by the archaeologists. This evidence sets at rest all controversies regarding the age of the cave inscriptions. They cannot be placed earlier than the beginning of the Christian era." Indian Palaeography, (1963), pp. 72-74.

But in the light of our discussion of the formation and use of the medial vowel a both short and long in the different cave inscriptions in the Tamil country, it may not be possible to agree with Dani with regard to their date, though there cannot be any difficulty in fixing the date of the Arikamādu potsherds.
TENTATIVE
CHRONOLOGICAL ARRANGEMENT
OF THE CAVE INSCRIPTIONS

Ariṭṭapatti (Māngulam) ... 3rd Century B.C.

Karungalakkuḍi
Kilavalaruvu
Marugāḷtalai
Kongarpuliyankulam
Vikkiramangalam

Alagarmalai ... 2nd Century B.C.

Śittannavaśal ... late 2nd Century B.C.

Tirupparankunram
Siddharmalai (Mēṭṭupatti)
Muttupatti
Varicciyur (Kunnattur)
Ānaimalai

Pugaliyur
Kunnakkudi

Māmāndur
Araccalur

... 3rd to 2nd Century B.C.

... 1st Century B.C.

... 2nd or 3rd Century B.C.

... Late 3rd or early 4th Century A.D.
Fig. 13. Map of Madras State showing the sites with cavern and potsherid inscriptions.
Ariṭṭapatti (Māngulām)

Ariṭṭapatti is a village that is situated midway between Melur and the Alagarmalai hills in the Madurai District. Not far away from the village is Māngulām where there is a range of hills called Kalugumalai or Uvamalai. The ascent is through the rocky slopes of the hill, which are very steep. On the eastern slope of the hill there are five caverns with the usual beds and Brāhmi inscriptions. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says that "of the four caverns discovered in the Kalugumalai hill, three contain smoothly chiselled beds cut on the bottom rocks. In some, the beds are quite numerous and run in different directions. All the four bear Brāhmi inscriptions." ¹ The long inscription in the lower-most cavern is not written on the brow of the overhanging boulder but on another which forms the backwall of its northern portion. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says: "The inscription is engraved on the open face of a bare rock at an inaccessible height in bold and clear characters. In front of the rock is a spacious court-yard without any bed and without the least sheltering place as in the case of all other caverns." ² The floor of the cavern is sandy and hence no beds are found in it. The southern part of the cavern extends to a depth of 49 feet 5 inches between two boulders that serve as walls. The entire length of the cavern which is in the shape of a curve is 58 feet and the height at the opening is roughly 11½ feet. There are as many as 31 beds both inside and outside on a protecting platform. One of the beds in front of the last cavern measures 7 feet 8 inches by 5 feet and is on a higher level than the others and occupies a central position.

The inscription* in the lowest cavern which is the longest so far discovered has been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:

:\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ka ni ya n [a] na ta si ri ya ku} \\
\text{a na dha ma ma i ta na ti} \\
\text{ña ca thhi ya na sa l [a] ka}
\end{align*}
\]

¹. Proceedings and Transactions of the Third All India Oriental Conference, p. 276.
². Ibid., p. 289.
³. 460 of 1906.
⁴. P—28
He has also noted that at the bottom of the second letter na is found attached a vertical stroke like the medial u sign and that the length of the letters read by him as na (eg. the fourth one) is generally of the Bhattiprolu type throughout.

He observes the occurrence of the catthiyanu once and perhaps, its variant, Catikana twice. He also thinks it possible that the letters ce i ya at the end may stand for caitiyanu and paliya for palya and that if so, these would be some at least of the Prakrt words in the inscription. "The three possible words siriyaka, siriyaku and yaka sitika which occur in this record and in the epigraphs 2 and 5 below include in them the word yaka (Yaksha) which is not uncommon in Buddhist names." He also notes that the word Yakana is also found in the third epigraph recovered from Alagarimalai.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, who assigns basic values to the letters na etc. as in the rest, renders the record as follows:

Ka ni yaṇ Nata siri Yakuan dhamam ita
Natiṇ Carīyaṇ Salakaṇ Itaṇ Carīkaṇ tantaiv
Carīkāṇ cei ya pāli y.

He notes that the opening words Kaṇiyaṇ Nata Sīri Yakuan occurs in a slightly altered form, Karaniṇa Nōla Sīri Yakaru in the next record, which is found in another cavern in the same hill and as such may be considered as representing the same person. In Kaṇiyaṇ, the first word of the record ka takes the place of kara found in the second; and similarly ya takes the place of the final ra. He thinks that the word really intended here is karani which originally meant a mixed caste of the anuloma variety. The next word found written respectively as nata and nōla in these two records, he thinks, are variants of the word nātha, 'a chief.' Yakuan which occurs as Yakaru in the next record is the Sanskrit Yaksha in its Prakrt form Yakkha with the Tamil masculine suffix an. [He takes this an suffix as nothing but the third personal pronoun ava. Similarly the suffix ra of the next record is considered as equivalent to the
honorific ār in Tamil or rū in Kannada.] The occurrence of the words Siri and natha in the name is taken as indicating the one as a person of some importance. Dhamam is taken by him as a variant of dharmma with the Tamil neuter suffix m added, and the penultimate letter lengthened. Similarly the words tantai, makan and ilda are taken as standing for tantai makan and ida (the last word being the equivalent of the modern Tamil word iden, third person neuter pronoun). "In the passage coming after ilda, Carikan and Cariyam are proper names, one being a variant of the other thus exemplifying the common rule that ya takes the place of ka, passing through the form a invariably as in Prākṛt......Neṇāni and Ilan prefixed to Cariyam or Carikan mean the "elder and the younger."

Ce'iya seems to be the Prākṛt form of caitya which adopts to itself, the other alternative form ce ti ya or saiya. And finally paliya is taken as the Tamil word pali meaning an excavation in stone set apart for the residence of monks.

The whole record is translated by him as follows: "This is the charity of the glorious chief Sri-Yaksa, a Karani (by caste). This stone excavation for a relic chamber was made by Carikan, the father of Ilaka-Carikan, and the brother-in-law of Neṇāni-Carayan."

Narayana Rao groups the words as follows:

Kanyana nāla siri-yaku ana dhamama
ilda nāṭena Čaṭṭhiyana sa'īakana Ilana
caṭikana tana-taiya; Caṭikana Ce'iya
paliya

and restores them in Sanskrit as

Gaṇakānaṃ nātha (nam) Sri-yakṣanām
dharmam; idha (Pali 'here') (ilda)
martinam sarthavahakanam Sim-
haḷanam brēṣṭhikānum
dana-deyam; brēṣṭhikānum
caitya palika

which he translates as

"the gift of the prosperous yakṣas, the accountants? the gift of the Śrēṣṭhins or chiefs of the wandering traders of Ceylon who have camped here; the 'Catiya Pālika' or relic monastery of (built by) the merchant chiefs."

He also thinks that it is possible that 'nala' may be a scribal error for nota—Sanskrit Snusā=daughter-in-law, occurring in the next record.

The other inscriptions found at the place have been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:

3. C [a] na ta ri ta na ko tu pi tō na
4. Ve la a dai ni ka ma tō ra koṭi [o ra]
5. Ve la [a] [dai] ya ni ka ma t [a] ko [pō] ti ra [ya] ka si ti ka a [ri te] a
   sa la na pi na ka ko tu pi tō na."

He says that there seem to be three dots arranged like the Aśokan letter i before ca at the beginning of the third record, but it is highly doubtful if they have to be taken so; he also thinks that the last two letters of the fourth record, a and ra, (though given in his reading as o and ra), one engraved so close to the other that they may be read also as a broadly formed la. He further notes that the expression veṭa aḍaiyanikāma occurs in both the fourth and fifth records only with an extra syllable ya comparable with the superfluous consonant y which occurs frequently in early Tamil inscriptions after syllables ending in medial ai. Likewise koṭupitōna occurs in both the third and fifth records and has to be connected with the root ekotu. Notasiriyaka occurring in the second inscription is seen in the first record as notasiriyaku.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that all the above four form one single inscription in two parts relating probably to two different compartments in the cavern in which these are found.

5. 461 to 65 of 1906.
The text as read by him runs as follows:

2 & 3. Karanța nọla Siri Yakaru Canatarita Koțupitōn

4. Veľ-ațai nikamator Koțır

5. Veľ-ațaim nikamatako potin yakasiti kaarilava Sakta
Piṇaka koțupitōn.

He takes the first two (i.e. the first three according to Krishna Sastri) go together forming one inscription. Veľ-ațai is treated as the name of the place Veľațai, wherein a single la is used in the place of the double lla required, which phenomenon has been found by him in these records. The word nikama may either be connected with nigama (naigama) merchants which occurs in Prakṛt inscriptions as nekhama and negama or treated as a place ending like sthāna, nagara or pura being connected with Veľațai. He also notes that in Pāli the word nekhama occurs in the sense of 'renunciation from the world' and is one of Paramī's supreme virtues, and that though this sense is not possible in this epigraph yet in the sense 'one coming from' a place, it will well suit, at being only a euphonic particle. The last word koțır is taken to stand for koțṭuvitān without the addition of the euphonic particles.

The record is translated by him as follows:

"Caused to be excavated by the glorious chief yakan Canatarita, a Karani (by caste). The citizens (or merchants) of Veľațai cut it."

In the last record the word potir probably means a daughter (putri); nikamatako has to be regarded as a dative singular and means 'of a citizen.' Yakasiti is the proper name of the individual and kaarilō means 'caused to be made.' Piṇaka should be considered as the variant of Piṇakkan with the double ka.

The meaning of this record is: "Yakṣasiti, the daughter of a citizen of Veľațai caused to be made (this cave) and Sattan Piṇakkan had it cut."

Narayana Rao reads the inscriptions as follows:

2. Karanîra n(ô) ta sirî-yaka-(râ)
3. Câna tarîhana koṭūpîloṇâ

4 & 5. Veḷa-aṭṭaya nikamatalkô pô ita
(ya) kasiti Ka'â (vîlé) 'â
satana piṇaka koṭūpîloṇâ

He adds the following notes to explain his heading:

"Karanîra (Karana and—ira) where Karana has in Prâkâ the meanings ‘kri, kriya, vidhana’ (Thânangasutta, 3.1; Suraśundarâricâriya 4.24); or a ‘court of justice’ (Upadêśapada, 117); or ‘one who does’ (Kumârapalacarîla); any of these meanings—ira is a malûp suffix meaning ‘having’—nôːa is from Skt. ‘snuṣa’; son’s wife; noha in Mahâraṣṭri Prâkâ—nôːa as Mr. Krishna Sastri suggests, may be a variant of nâːa, Skt. naha. Siriyaka, Skt. Śrî-yaḵsa—raçeina, Skt. raṁam, of kings, tarîhana Skt. dârîhanam or daḍraṇam, ‘of those which have been excavated,’ ‘of the poor’—koṭūpîloṇâ, Skt. kuṭṭapîlanam, ‘of those which have been cut’—veḷa may be connected with the prâkâ veḷâ Skt. vîlāsa pleasure; or veḷâla Skt. vidâraka, an excavator Sûtrakṣtango—nîryukti, 36), or Skt. vaikâlika ‘belonging to the after-noon’; (Daśavaikâlikanîryukti, 1.5 : 17 :—aṭṭaya, Skt. arthaya, for the purpose of—nikamata, a collection of Naigamas or congregations of merchant guilds—kô, Skt. kâ, ‘for the purpose of’—tâ is a suffix giving the meaning of ‘a collection or congregation’—pôːira, Skt. putri, or pautri; ‘a daughter or grand-daughter.’ Yakasîî may be a proper name or a common name from Skt. Yaḵsa-stri, a yakṣîni or a merchant woman (of Yaḵsa who is always referred to as a merchant—ka’arite’s, Skt. Karîvati, Saktanam Skt. sarhâvaham for ‘wandering merchants’—(Piṇaka, Skt. Vinayaka, (Vinayaka a ‘Yaḵsa,’ Yakṣîni, (Paumacarîa, 33.22); Koṭūpîloṇa Skt.) kuṭṭapîlanam (I do not accept the sonant’d in these records and so, as elsewhere I have read it as ‘ṭṭâ’)."

The meaning of the inscription according to Narayana Rao is:

"The daughter-in-law of the king (honorisic plural used) who had got this cave excavated and cut, the daughter of Yaḵṣastri"
(proper name) a 'Piṅāka' or 'Yakṣīṇī' had this done for all the congregations of wandering merchants as an after-noon (resting place)."

The actual reading of the first inscription is as follows:

\[\text{Ka} \text{ ni ya na na ta si ri ya ku a na} \]
\[\text{dha (or e) ma ma i ta ne ti na cu li ya na} \]
\[\text{sa ka na i ta na cu ti ka na ta na tai} \]
\[\text{cu ti ka na ce i [ta or ya] li ya.} \]

In this inscription the thirteenth letter which has been read as \text{dha} may also be read as the vowel \text{E}. The third letter from the end has been read as \text{ya} by all scholars so far. A perusal of the photograph would show that the letter is damaged and appears to have been corrected or over-written. The form of \text{ta} is also seen. Evidently it is \text{ta} having been corrected from \text{ya} chiselled originally.

In the Drāviḍi restoration the inscription would be as follows:

\[\text{Kaṇiy nanta siriy ku a=n emam iλa} \]
\[\text{detin Caṭiyan salakan ila-Caṭikan tanlaiy} \]
\[\text{Caṭikan ceita paliy} \]

The letter \text{ya} occurs four times in this record; and in all the four places it follows the medial vowel \text{i,} and as such it has to be treated as the superfluous suffix, a feature very common in early Tamil inscriptions. We have discussed earlier about the word \text{paliy}. This will mean bed. \text{Ceita} is evidently the adjectival particle of which the correct form is \text{ceita}, meaning 'made by.' \text{Caṭikan} is evidently the name of a person, having a son named \text{Ila-Caṭikan} i.e., \text{Caṭikan} the junior. Very likely the word is related to the Sanskrit form \text{Jaṭila}. Subrahmanya Ayyar has pointed out that the word \text{shake} means a brother-in-law and it is the same as \text{slaka} or \text{sakalai} now used. The use of the Sanskrit letter \text{s} clearly shows that this is not a Tamil word \text{Neṭīṇ-caṭiyan} like \text{Ila-caṭikan} would mean \text{caṭiyan}, the senior, the correct form of the word being \text{Neṭum}. But we have also the use of the medial \text{i} in the word \text{Neṭiyōn}, meaning a tall person or a superior person. That \text{Caṭiyan} is the name of a person is clear from the suffix of the third person masculine \text{a}. It may
be that it is connected with Caṭikāṇ or Caḷiyāṇ in which case it would mean a Pāṇḍya. It is well known that the name Neṭun Cēḷiyaṇ is a common one among the Pāṇḍyas.

Then the latter portion of the record would mean: "This is the paḷi (or paḷī) made by Caṭikāṇ, father of Ḫaṭcaṭikāṇ (i.e. Caṭikāṇ the Junior) brother-in-law of Neṭun-caliyaṇ (i.e. Caḷiyāṇ the senior).

The earlier portion of the record is not so easy. The first word Kaṇiy means a fortune teller (or astrologer) or one who practises the art of prognostication. We know that the Ājñvikas were adepts in that art and that they were practising it. Nanta is evidently the Sanskrit word Nanda meaning one of the treasures of Kubēra and also the name of his attendants. Siriy very often occurs as the form of Śri Kuṇa should be the name of a person like Kuven, Kuyan, or Kuban. Very likely it is Kubēra.

It is possible that Kuṇa (is the form of) represents Kuven or Kuhan, i.e., Guhaṇ or Guhyaka. We know that guhyas or guhyakas are connected with the Yakṣas who figure as the vehicles or bearers (vahanas) of the Yakṣa gods like Kubēra.

It is also possible to read the whole expression Śiri Yakaṇa taking it as Śri Yakṣa. But even then the difficulty is there as the form Yakuan for Yakṣa is no where found.

The next word Ṣmām means gold (hema) or protection (from kṣema). It is used in the latter sense in the Puranaṇāraṇu.

It is taken as dhāmam it will become dharma. But it denoted the law or right mode of conduct and is not known to have been used in the sense of a charity or gift in those days. The word evidently acquired the latter meaning, i.e., gift or charity only in later days when dana came to be considered more meritorious than sacrifice (yajña) and became part of one's mode of life.

If the reading Dhamma, is adopted, it would signify Dharma, one of the God's, prominently mentioned in early inscriptions.8

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It is the word ita which baffles the construction and interpretation of the whole record. As it is, the word does not convey any meaning. It should be itu (meaning this) or inla meaning ‘given by.’ But this letter is an adjectival participle requiring a noun immediately following it. In this record paliy or bed is the only noun, and it comes at the end. Such a construction is very unusual. The correct form of the word would be the infinite verb intu (having given). But the engraver intended only ta, as this is clear from the single a long symbol of a horizontal line at the top added to the letter on the right. If the word itu is also taken as forming part of a personal name, then there will not be much difficulty in the interpretation of the record as the earlier portion will be adjectival qualifying the name Netumcaliyan. This has possibly some connection with the words itatuve and itatavin occurring in the second and third labels at Kongarpuliyankulam.

We have seen earlier that ita and ida occur in the Prakrit inscriptions of Western India as standing for Indra. The earlier portion thus probably means: “With the gold given by Nanda Siri Kubera or Nanda Sri Yaksha the (astrologer) fortune-teller.”

B. The actual reading of the inscription is:—

Ka ra ni ra na ta si ri ya ka [ru]

The horizontal stroke to the left of the fifth letter, read as no by Krishna Sastri is not clear. Probably we have to take it as only na as Subrahmanyia Ayyar has done. The last letter read as ru may also be taken as the vowel u. In the penultimate sign ka the lower portion is damaged. Hence it cannot be definitely said whether it is ka or ku.

C. The actual reading of the next label is:

C [a] na ta ri ta na ko tu pi to na

Krishna Sastri says that the three dots arranged in the form of a triangle like the Aśokan letter i are found at the beginning of the record, but at the same time says that “it is highly doubtful if they have to be taken so.”

P—27
This record may be restored in Dravidi as:

*Cantaritan koṭupiltōn*

This label gives the name of the person who gave away or caused to be made the cavern or bed. It is to be translated as:

*Cantaritan* is the person who gave this.

*Cantaritan* is evidently a compound made up of the two words *Canta* and *arita* both of which names occur in Brahmi records.

It is also to be noted that in common with the other Brahmi inscriptions found in this part of the country the word *koṭupiltōn* stands for *koṭuppiiltōn* without doubling the consonants p and t as required.

D. The reading of the fourth label is:

*Ve la a òai ni ka mā to ra ko t [i] [o ra]*

The label is to be restored in Dravidi as:

*Veḷ-ātaī nikamator kọtiōr.*

As pointed out by Subrahmanya Ayyar *Veḷ-ātaī* evidently stands for *Vellādai*, the name of a place; and *nikamator* for those belonging to *nikama* or *nigama*, the trading corporation. The last word *kọtiōr* is taken as standing for *koṭupitan* or *koṭṭuvital*. It should be noted that it is not found used elsewhere in this form. As such it is not possible to take this word in that sense.

The word *Kọtiyār* is found largely used in early classical Tamil literature. Commentators explain the word as meaning *Viraliyār*, the women-folk of the *Panār* class, as they move their body in zig-zag manner when they dance. Probably *Kọtiyār* is the feminine form of *Kọṭar* about whom also mention is made in classical Tamil literature. These *Kọṭar* are probably to be taken as the *Nāgas* (possibly derived from *Kọṭa* or *Karkọṭa*). Thus *Kọtiyār* would mean the women folk of the *Nāga* people. Both the words *Kọtiyār* and *Kọtiyōr* are variant forms of the same word, and mean the same.
Thus the label may be translated as:

The Koṭiyōr (Nāga women) belonging to the nikama (i.e. nigama or naigama, the merchant corporation) of Veḷḷaḍai.

E. In Drāvidī the fifth inscription will be restored as:

Veḷḷaṭaiy nikamatakopolīr
yaka sitiṅkaritea calan
piṅaka koṭupiṣṭōn.

The last word koṭupiṣṭōn would mean “person who caused it to be given”. Very likely this record contains more of the Pīṅkat element and has to be translated as follows, following Subrahmanya Ayyar:

"Yaka Siti, the daughter, of a citizen of Veḷḷaḍai caused to be made (this cave) and Cattan Piṅakkan had it cut."
KARUNGĀLAKKUDI

This village lies about eight miles to the north of Melur in the Madurai District on the road to Tiruchirapalli. The caverns on the hills near the place and the beds chiselled therein are of special interest. One of the caverns which contains a Brāhmī inscription measures 33 feet east to west as well as north to south, opening both on the southern and northern sides.

In another cavern higher up on the same hill there is a Vaṭṭeluttu inscription in Tamil verse cut on one in a row of rocky beds. That record states that a certain chief called Pallidaraiyan rendered service in different capacities to his master the Pāṇḍya king referred to in the verse by the terms Vaḷudi or Miṇavan, by building a bright vimāna, stopping the sea from encroaching and by protecting sacrifices at Tiruppodiylil by his scholarship, asceticism and saintliness (?). Apparently it contains a reference to the sage Agastya whose intimate connection with the Pāṇḍyas, the Podiyil hill and Tamil literature is so well-known. The age to which Pallidaraiyan or his master, the Pāṇḍya king, belonged, cannot be determined at present; but palaeographically the Vaṭṭeluttu characters in which the epigraph is incised may be assigned to the ninth century A.D. One interesting inference the inscription leads to is that the beds in the natural caverns were used not only by the Jaina saints, but also by laymen about twelve hundred years ago, as is done by mendicants of the present day.

Further on a rock, opposite to the cavern containing the Brāhmī record on the west is engraved a Jaina image with a Vaṭṭeluttu inscription below it, which invokes the teacher Ajjanāndi.*

The short Brāhmī inscription consisting of eleven characters has been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:—

\[E\, su\, y\, a\, v\, u\, a\, t\, i\, n\, a\, p\, a\, i\]

1. No 563 of 1911.
2. No. 562 of 1911.
3. No. 561 of 1911.
He considers that the first five syllables which end in \textit{ura} may constitute the name of a village and also draws attention to the word \textit{pali} occurring in other records also (\textit{Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi} and \textit{Kīlavālavu}).\footnote{See \textit{Proceedings of the First All. India Oriental Conference}, pp. 208 and 217.} He also thinks that between the eighth and ninth letters of the record, \textit{ti} and \textit{na} the impression shows a symbol, somewhat like that of the mark of interrogation (?). He is not sure whether it is to be read as Aśokan \textit{kha} or simply treated as a clumsy slit on the stone.

Subrahmanya Ayyar, treating the \textit{na} as a basic consonant reads the inscription as consisting of three words.

\textit{Eṭhuyarūra Ariṭiṇ Paḷi}

He also supplies the masculine suffix \textit{n} to the first word, the modern equivalent of which will be \textit{Etṭiyūran} and translates it as

\begin{quote}
"This is the cave of Ariti of Eṭṭiyūr."
\end{quote}

Narayana Rao follows Krishna Sastri in his reading of the inscription and restores the epigraph in Sanskrit as follows:

\textit{Eṭhuyarara Hariṭanam Pali} = (\textit{Ki} ?).

The actual reading of the record is:

\begin{quote}
\textit{E} ṭhu \textit{ya} \textit{u} \textit{ra} \textit{Ari} \textit{ti} \textit{da} \textit{pa} \textit{ti}. \\
\end{quote}

In accordance with the general principle followed in reading the Drāviḍi script found in the Bhaṭṭiprōlū inscription, the present inscription may be read as follows:

\begin{quote}
\textit{[E]} ṭhuyūr Ariṭiṇ \textit{paḷi}.
\end{quote}

The words \textit{aritin} and \textit{paḷi} have been discussed earlier. The only other word in the present inscription is \textit{Eṭhuyūr}. The suffix \textit{ūr} added to it points to the fact that it is the name of the village. The record will therefore mean

\begin{quote}
"The bed of Aritin (i.e. Hārita) of Eṭhuyūr (or Eṭṭiyūr)."
\end{quote}
KILAVALAVU

On the low range of hills with huge boulders between Kiliur and Kilavalavu, nearly seven miles from Melur on the road to Tirupattur are found some caverns containing the usual beds and inscriptions. Near one of these caverns there are cut in the rock numerous Jaina figures with Vaṭṭeluttu inscriptions below them. The Brahmī inscription discovered as early as 1903 (and it was the first to be discovered in the Tamil country) is about fifteen feet from the ground level of the cavern. Many letters are written upside down and are boldly cut. Evidently the engraver had better convenience to work from the upper part of the cave than from the front.

According to Parker, there is an old Brahmī inscription written upside down on one of the Tsavangam Puliyangulam hills in Ceylon. He refers to it as the first instance of what is known there as the Paerali Bāṣā. In this system is required an interchange or transformation of letters in written or spoken words; and in interpretation, the letters have to be read from right to left. Krishna Sastri was doubtful if the Kilavalavu Brahmī inscription was of this variety. Probably he felt it was not.

His transcription of the record was as under

*u pā [c] a a pā ta ne tu la vō
chō ko tu pā ti v

Among the letters in the inscription, the sixth and the twelfth te and ko are in the normal correct position with reference to the reader from the ground, while the others are upside down.

1. The place appears to have been a strong centre of Jaina influence like Anaimalai. The figures of the naked Jaina Tirthankaras etc. are interpreted by the local people as ‘school children’, and the whole spot is connected by them with a school that is supposed to have once existed here. Evidently the word pālā which denotes a Jaina Temple also meaning a school is responsible for this belief of the people.

2. No. 135 of 1903.

He also notes that the word *Upacza* at the beginning seems to suggest the Prākrit forms of *upadhyaya* and *vachō* are like-wise synonymous. The root *kotu* has occurred elsewhere. He also compares the word *pali* with the word *paliya* occurring in the record A at Ariṭṭāpatṭi.

Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the first word *upa-ca-a* may be regarded as the Tamil form of *upasaka* through Prākrit, as found largely in Ceylon inscriptions. He reads the record as follows:

*upa-ca-a pōla Neṭula Vōcco*  
*kotu pali i.*

According to him the second word *pōla* is no doubt the equivalent of *putra*. *Neṭula vōcco* is the name of a person, the second part of which is the Prākrit form of *vasta* as may be seen from the same form of *vaccō* standing for *vasta* in the Bhaṭṭiprolu Casket inscriptions. I at the end of the record is treated by him as the pronoun ‘this’. “If the word of the word at the end of a sentence is objectionable and unlikely, it may form part of *pali*. This inscription is the second one which uses the word *pali* in the sense of a ‘Cave’.” Subrahmanya Ayyar translates the record as follows:

“This is the cave cut by Neṭula Vōccan the son of a lay devotee”.

Narayana Rao reads the record as follows:

*upaça’a pōla nattalā vocco kotu pali’i*

restores it as:

*upadhyaya-putraḥ natya kar o padhyayah*  
*kuttapita paliha (ki o)*

and translates it as

“the monastery that the instructor of the dancers, the son of the teacher, got cut”.

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The reading of the inscription is as follows:

\[ u\ p\ a\ c\ a\ a\ p\ o\ t\ a\ n\ e\ t\ u\ I\ z\ v\ o\ c\ o\ h\ o\ t\ u\ p\ a\ i\ i \]

There seems to be some space between the second and third letters, i.e., \( p\ a \) and \( c\ a \). It is also to be noted that these two have each two \( \alpha \) long symbols added to their right. As pointed out earlier the sixth letter \( t\ a \) and twelfth letter \( k\ o \) are in correct position with reference to the reader from the ground, though the other letters are upside down. It is also possible to take the twelfth letter as \( k\ u \) taking it also as written upside down like the rest, as the horizontal stroke to take left at the bottom is not quite clear. The ninth letter read here as \( I\ z \) has been read by Krishna Sastri as \( I\ z \). It is also possible to read it \( I\ i \).

The \( \alpha \) symbol added to the ninth letter also looks like that of the medial vowel \( i \). The eleventh letter has been read as \( c\ h\ o \) by Krishna Sastri, and as \( c\ c\ o \) by Subrahmanya Ayyar. The loops at the bottom which should be discernible both to the left and the right are not clear. On the other hand it appears more like a horizontal line, thus making it look like \( n\ a \).

The reading of the inscription as restored in Dravidi will be:

\[ U\ p\ a\ c\ a\ a\ p\ o\ t\ a\ n\ e\ t\ u\ v\ o\ c\ o\ k\ o\ t\ u\ p\ a\ i\ i \]

\( U\ p\ a\ c\ a \) is derived from the Sanskrit word \( U\ p\ a\ s\ a\ k\ a \) and is possibly connected with the Tamil word \( U\ v\ a\ c\ c\ a \). The last two words \( k\ o\ t\ u\ p\ a\ i\ i \) would mean the \( p\ a\ i\ i \) or bed given by (i.e.: \( k\ o\ t\ u\ t\ a\ p\ a\ i\ i \) in modern form). The middle three words should form the name of a person. \( A\ p\ o\ t\ e \) may possibly be equated with \( a\ p\ u\ t\ r\ a\ n \) which name with the initial vowel lengthened as \( a\ p\ u\ t\ i\ r\ a\ n \) was borne by one of the characters appearing in the Tamil epic the \( M\ a\ n\ i\ m\ e\ k\ a\ l\ a\ i \).

\( N\ e\ t\ u\ l\ a \) should mean something like \( N\ e\ t\ u\ v\ e\ l \) (indicating god Muruga) or \( N\ e\ t\ i\ y\ o\ n \) (indicating Lord \( V\ i\ s\ u \)). Literally the word

6. cf. canto 24. \( A\ p\ u\ t\ i\ r\ a\ n\ n\ a\ d\ u\ a\ d\ a\ i\ n\ a\ k\ a\ t\ a\ i \); canto 25. \( A\ p\ u\ t\ i\ r\ a\ n\ o\ d\ o\ u \) \( M\ a\ n\ i\ p\ a\ l\ a\ v\ a m\ a\ d\ a\ i\ n\ a\ k\ a\ t\ a\ i \). \( A\ p\ u\ t\ i\ r\ a\ n\ n\ a\ d\ u, \) the land of \( A\ p\ u\ t\ r\ a\ n \) figures as one of the countries (an island) to which \( M\ a\ n\ i\ m\ e\ k\ a\ l\ a\ i \) the heroine of the poem is said to have flown by air from the \( C\ o\ l\ a \) capital \( k\ a\ v\ e\ r\ i\ p\ p\ a\ m\ p\ a\ s\ j\ i\ n\ a n \). Canto 24. \( I\ 169 \) mentions that \( N\ a\ g\ a\ p\ u\ r\ a \) was the capital of that island.
means a tall person or a person of great height (thus probably meaning the God having his temple on the top of a hill). \textit{Voco} is the Pr\'ak\'rt form of the word \textit{Vatsa}. It is also to be noted that the word \textit{n\'{e}tu\'{l}a} commences with the lingual \textit{\'{n}a} which is not one of the initial letters in Tamil, i.e., the letters with which a Tamil word commences. But in Pr\'ak\'rt the dental \textit{na} becomes lingual and we have many words commencing with the lingual \textit{\'{n}a}. This clearly shows the influence of Pr\'ak\'rt in this record.

The entire record may be translated as follows:

"The bed given by (endowed or made by) the up\'asaka (lay disciple) Aputtiran (Aputran) Ne\'{d}uvel vatsa (i.e. son of Ne\'{d}uvel)."
This is a small village in the Tirunelveli District about ten miles North-East of Palayamkottai, a part of the town Tirunelveli and on the southern side of the River Tamraparnī. A broad cavern has been formed by two huge boulders one over-hanging the other on the eastern side of the low hill locally known as Pūvil-uḍai-yār malai near the village. The hill has now a number of shrines consecrated to village deities. The rocky floor thus formed on the bottom rock contains a number of beds chiseled at convenient places in four different sections. The cavern runs to a length of 52 feet north to south and is 8 feet deep. A water drain (katarh) is cut on the edge of the overhanging boulder to lead off the rain water dripping from above. The cavern does not contain any sculpture as is found in some other caves; nor is there any water spring or water sources in the rocky hollows adjoining it. However, on some of the beds a few letters and diagrams of recent date are found incised. The figure of a lion found on some of the old Pallava coins and copper plates may be specially mentioned.

An inscription in Brāhmī characters is found incised on the brow of the boulder a little below the water-drain. The letters which are clear and well preserved range from one foot to fifteen inches in height. The inscription was first noticed by Mr. L. A. Cammiade, the Revenue Divisional Officer in the District in the year 1906 and brought to the notice of the Archaeological Department through Mr. D. T. Chadwick I.C.S., Settlement Officer of the District. This was examined and copied by the officers of the Epigraphy Department and its importance was recognised and noticed by V. Venkayya in his Epigraphy Report for the year 1908–7.

1. This name would mean “the hill of Pūvil-Uḍaiyar”. The term Pūvil-Uḍaiyar represents a god seated on a flower evidently a lotus, of malar micaṭ-y.śkināḥ occurring in the Tirukkhurēḻ.

2. It is said that seven beds are found cut in it (M.E.R., 1907, part II para I.) The beds were obviously meant for leaning or lying down.

3. Registered as No. 407 of 1906.
This short Brāhmi record of seventeen letters was read by H. Krishna Sastri as follows:

Ve na ko si pa na ku tu pi ta k [a] [a] ka na ca na na

He did not group the letters into words; nor did he try to translate or interpret the record. However, he drew the attention of scholars that the word kōsipana might be compared with the Sanskrit word kāsyaṇam and the word kuṭupīta with the Tamil word Koṭṭuvītan meaning caused to be cut (cf. also Childers: koṭlēti). He also added in a footnote: “The syllable kō (in the word Kōsipana) has been read directly from the stone. In the impression however there is a clear resemblance to ki.”

The sixth letter in the inscription is read by Krishna Sastri as na. But K. V. Subramanya Ayyar reads it as ṇa which letter is peculiar to the Tamil language; and treating the second, sixth, fourteenth and seventeenth letters (ṇa ṇa, ṇa, ṇa and ma) as basic consonants he reads the record as:

Vēn Kōsipan Kuṭupīta Kāla-Kaṅcanam

and translates it as: “auspicious (or stone) monastery was caused to be cut by Kaśyapa of the Vēn country (or the Veḻir chief Kaśyapa). Vēn is taken as the name of a territorial division now represented by the (former) Travancore State, though he concedes that “it is not precluded that Vēn may stand for veḻ, a ‘chief.’” Kōsipan is the proper name of a person equivalent to Kassapa in Pali, Kaśyapa in Sanskrit and Kaśipan in Tamil. He takes the word kuṭupīta as the verb with the final n omitted (kuṭupītan), with the root koṭu or kuṭu ‘to cut’ and p the causal particle. “Its modern form is Koṭṭuvītan and means ‘caused to be cut’” Kaḻakaṅcanam is taken by Subrahmanya Ayyar as a compound of two words kāla and kaṅcanam. The first word is derived from the Sanskrit word kālya also having the alternate form kalya meaning auspicious, or alternately taken as connected with the Tamil word kal (Singalese galā), meaning a hill or stone. The other word kaṅcanam, though generally it means gold or a variety of tree, has been taken to refer to the.

monument itself, an abode, monastery or temple, since it comes after the verb *kōṭṭuvittan*. In support of this K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar cites the remarks of Monier Williams that Hemādri uses this word in his *Caturvargacintāmanī* to denote a particular form of building. He also adds in a foot-note that according to Monier Williams *Kala* and *Kaṇcaṇa* are the names of future Buddhas and that “it is very doubtful if our inscription, early as it is, could have any reference to these.”

C. Narayana Rao reads and interprets this short record in two different ways treating the third letter either as *kō* or as *ki*. Treating the letter as *kō* he reads the inscription as Prakṛt.

**Vēna Kosipana *kutupita* kaḷakaṇcanam**

The word *Vēna* is restored by him as *vaśyanam* (*Vaiśya* becoming *Ve* in the following manner: *Vēsa* = *Vēyya* = *Vēya* = *Ve*; and the genitive plural suffix *na*, the Prakṛt form of the Sanskrit *nam*: *Kōsipāna* is *Kāśyanam*; *kutupita* is *kuttapita* ‘caused to be cut,’ and Kaḷakaṇcanam, ‘a particular form of building.’ He adds: “*kuttapita* is a past passive casual participle agreeing with *kaḷakaṇcanam*; the difference in the gender between the adjective and the noun need not give trouble. The agreement between the adjective and the noun is not strictly followed in the Prākrits.” Thus it will mean: “the *kaḷakaṇcanam* or building caused to be cut for (or by or belonging to) the people, the Kaśyapas.”

Alternately treating the letter as *ki* he reads it as *Vēnaki sipāna kutupita kaḷakaṇcanam* meaning “the *kaḷakaṇcanam* or building caused to be cut or built by a woman follower of the Buddhist *Vinaya* doctrine (or a woman whose personal name was *Vēnaki* or *Vainayaki*), restoring the word *Vēnaki* as *Vainayki* or Sanskrit (i.e.) a woman follower of the *Vinaya* or the Buddhist doctrine and *sipāna* as *śilpanam* belonging to the sect of the *śilpīns* or architects or artisans. He says that the second interpretation seems more probable.

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5. *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference* p. 288 n. But Krishna Sastri writes: “It is worthy of note that *Kalakaṇja* according to Childer’s *Pāli Dictionary* is a ‘sort of mats and Kalakaṇja’ according to Monier, Williams is the ‘name of a *Dīnava* family’” (op-cit., p. 347).

A fresh study of the inscription may be made on the following lines. As said above, while editing the inscriptions in the Brāhmī script recovered from Bhaṭṭiprolū Dr. Bühler has remarked that of the vowelled consonants, those with the addition of the symbol of long, a horizontal stroke at the top to the right, have to be read only as denoting short a and that long is denoted by the addition of another line hanging downward at the right of the horizontal stroke. As such, consonant letters without any additional symbol have to be treated as pure or vowel-less consonants. It is found that the latter principle fits in with the above. If the former principle is also applied here, the fifth and tenth letters read as ṭa and ṭa respectively become short ones, pa and la. Thus the word kōsipaṇ has to be read as Kosipaṇ and the word kuṭupila as kuṭupita. Similarly the eleventh and thirteenth letters read as kā have to be treated as ka with the short a. The record would then read:

Vēn Kōsipaṇ kuṭupila kal kaṅcaṇam

The word vēn need not necessarily be taken as having any relation to the territorial division vēṇādu. It is not known whether this division existed as such in those early days. Even then, the term Vēṇādu is formed of the words Vēl and nādu only. As such it is the Tamil word Vēl which in conjunction with Kōsipaṇ becomes Vēn. Cf Vēl = māran = Vēn + māran. This word is generally taken to mean a chieftain. But it also means sacrifice. In fact later day traditions describe the chieftains


8. According to the above principle to read the last three letters as caṇam it is necessary that the symbol of long is found added to the letters ca and ṇa. But it is not possible to assert this positively from the photograph of the inked impression of the record available. Even otherwise it cannot be read any other way. In Tamil a basic or pure consonant will not occur consecutively. Further the number of words beginning with ṇa as the initial letter are very few and no such word with its pair ca coming as a pure consonant immediately following it is possible. It is always the other way. The occurrence of the letter ṇa with ca immediately following it would clearly demonstrate that ṇa should be taken as a pure consonant and the succeeding ca as a vowelled one with the inherent a. Similarly the next letter ṇa should also be taken as a vowelless consonant with the inherent a as it is followed by the final m.
having the title vēḷ or Vēḷiv as descendants of one who had sprung from the sacrificial fire.

The Tamil nighantu known as the Pingalandaik and ascribed to the tenth century A.D. gives the meaning benevolence-gift to the Tamil word vēḷiv, ordinarily meaning sacrifice. This nighantu contains a large number of words with their meanings not ordinarily found used in literature, but which are found in epigraphy. i.e., kūntu = horse, talai = first; tanicu = loan etc. Hence the meaning of gift for the word vēḷiv found in this nighantu alone, without appropriate literary usage to support it, need not be brushed aside. (Probably the gift of munificent dakṣiṇas in a yajña sacrifice has some thing to do with it). It may be noted in this connection that the seven persons known as kāḍai-yeluvallal mentioned in classical Tamil literature had each the title vēḷ. Evidently the word vēḷ alo denoted a person of small benevolence or liberality. In that case Kosipan of the record was likewise a benevolent person whose benevolence is vouched for by the gift of this monument.

The word kūṭupīla has been equated by the previous scholars with kotṭuvillān. The use of the word kotṭuvillān in the sense caused to be cut' is very rare in Tamil epigraphy. Further the occurrence of the participle pi in the inscription makes the equation untenable, as it should be vi, if the word intended is kotṭuvillān. It should therefore be taken as kūṭupīla 'caused to be given or donated' the correct literary form of which is kolutpīla. But it should be noted that the form kūṭuḷa instead of kōṭuḷa occurs ordinarily in Tamil inscriptions and is a common feature. (Even now the word is used as kūṭu or kūṭuḷa in common speech throughout the country.)

It is to be noted that the doubling of consonants is absent.

This word cannot be taken as the verb with the final a dropped. It is the adjectival participle. As such the word kāḷ-kaṇ-canam following kūṭupīla should denote what has been given, the object of the gift mentioned in the record.

The previous scholars have taken the word as kāḷaṅkaṇcanam with the dental na instead of the lingual na, clearly seen in the

inscription. Considering the occurrence of the lingual न the word may be taken as the compound कल-कान-चाणम.

チャー is related to the Sanskrit word शायन, meaning bed. It is also the Prākrit form and is derived from the Sanskrit form with the dropping of या and the conversion of the dental ना into the lingual न. This word also appears to have denoted a dwelling place. This will become clear if it is compared with the expression Āmattūr cāṇippaṇai in Tirunāvukkarāsār's Tēvāraṁ 10 on Tiruvāmattūr where the God of the place is referred to as 'he who resides or dwells at Āmattūr.'

The word कल denotes a hill, stone or rock. The word कल-कान-चाणम may therefore be taken as denoting 'an abode formed or made of stone.' Then the word कम, the m of which according to the rules of sandhi becomes _ACCEPTABLE when it is joined to a word beginning with a, should mean cut or made out. In fact the Tolkāppiyam 11 ascribes the meaning (tōli) art, operation, employment, to the word कम and the commentary called Virutti on the Nannāl 12 takes it as meaning smith's work. The terms कम्मियar, कम्मālar etc. denoting the artisan classes in general were themselves derived from the word कम. Thus the compound कल-कान-चाणम may be translated as 'the abode or dwelling place made or cut from stone.'

The whole inscription may be translated as follows:

"The abode or dwelling place (or bed) made or cut from stone" cauTed to be given or donated by Veṇ鸟 Kosippaṇ (i.e. Kosippaṇ or Kāsyapa the benevolent philanthropist).
KOŊGARPULIYANKULAM

This village lies nine and a half miles south-west of Madurai on the Tirumangalam road and is situated on the borders of the Madurai Taluk. On a low range of bald rock about two hundred yards north-east of this small village is a narrow cleft which does not allow one to sit freely, much less to stand. Six caverns have been chiselled in the overhanging rock. On the rounded edge of one of these caverns have been engraved three Brahmi inscriptions\(^1\) in bold and clear characters of about the second or third century before the Christian era. There are six sets of beds on the ground floor of the three next caverns, most of them without pillow-lofts. Of them four are in good condition and stretch north to south. One of the sets consists of ten beds; another of six; the third, of eight, the fourth, of four, the fifth, of three and the beds in the sixth are all very much damaged. On the whole there are thirty-three beds. The size of the beds varies from 18' × 1'6" in the longest to 5'7" × 1'6" in the shortest.

Higher up on the rock are some Jaina figures and a Vattelutti inscription.

Krishna Sastri read the Brahmi inscriptions at the place as follows:

(i) \( \text{Ku} \, \text{tū} \, \text{ko} \, \text{tu} \, \text{pi} \, \text{ta} \, \text{va} \, \text{na} \, \text{u} \) \( \text{pa} \, \text{ca} \, \text{a} \, \text{na} \, \text{[ū]} \) \( \text{pa} \, \text{[tū]} \) \( \text{va}. \)

(ii) \( \text{Pa} \, \text{ka} \, \text{na} \, \text{[ū]} \, \text{ra} \, \text{pi} \, \text{ta} \, \text{na} \, \text{i} \) \( \text{ta} \, \text{ta} \, \text{ve} \, \text{pō} \) \( \text{na} \)

(iii) \( \text{[ku]} \, \text{t} \, \text{[ū]} \) \( \text{ko} \, \text{ta} \, \text{la} \, \text{ku} \, \text{[i]} \) \( \text{ta} \) \( \text{ta} \, \text{vi} \, \text{na} \, \text{e} \, \text{tū} \, \text{a} \, \text{t} \, \text{[a]} \) \( \text{na} \, \text{le} \, \text{na} \).

He notes that the letter read by him as \( \text{tū} \) occurring twice as the second and the sixteenth in the first inscription, shows two different forms in the medial \( \text{u} \) sign and that it is not unlikely

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1. 55, 56 and 57 of 1910.
that the last letter of the same is part of a punctuation which is
found in the case of two other inscriptions from Kongarpuliyan-
kulam.

He remarks that kutu which occurs in the first and third
inscriptions is perhaps the same as kutu of Tirupparamukram
and that kutupita, kutupita, kutupita are all connected with each
other and with the root koto. The five syllables u, pa, ca, a and
na may suggest the Sanskrit upadhyayanam. Itala of the second
record may also be noted to be the first element of the word
italavina of the third record. The five syllables pa ka na u ra
of the second may be compared with the name of the old, territori-

al division called Paganurukram, which, however, was to the
north of Madurai. Lena of the third record may be the Pali lena
(layana) 'cave.' If so, this will be the one clear Pali word
found in these inscriptions. Of the two symbols of punctuation
which occur in the second and third inscriptions, the latter is
found also in the early Ceylon inscriptions.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar opines that these relate to the
excavation of three caves or three compartments in one cave and
reads them as under:

(i) Kutu kutupitavan Upaca an Uparuwan
(ii) Pakanur-potata Pitam Italave len
(iii) Kutu kotalaku Italavin Cetu atan len

He takes the word Uparuwan occurring in the first inscription
as the proper name of a person. The other three words having
been already dealt with, he translates the first inscription as
"the lay devotee Uparuwan caused the cave to be cut."

Regarding the second inscription he says:

The penultimate letter of the last word is damaged. I
prefer to take it as le with the right arm much worn out,
Pakanur is no doubt the name of a village as the ending ur clearly
shows. Shortening the penultimate a in Pakan, we get its modern
equivalent to be Pakanur, a village after which Paganur-kurram.

2. See Parker, Ancient Ceylon, p. 446, plate.
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one of the principal divisions of the Pāṇḍya country, was known in ancient times. It was in this division that Solavandan, Tenkarai and the villages in their vicinity were Situated. The meaning of Pōtātān is not clear. Like ātaṇ, which we sometimes find added to village names, this word may mean 'one belonging to.' The words Piṭān Itātāven; with the final <TextView>𝐧</TextView> supplied, may be taken as a proper name. Piṭān is a shortened form of Bhāṭara which comes in Tamil as Paḍāran. Piḍāran and Piḍāṇ, NavController means a cave. Often the word is used with the lingual ṇ in place of Ɲ (See Hathigumpha and Uḍavallī cave Inscriptions).” He translates the inscription as:

“This is the cave of Piḍāṇ Itātāven, a resident of Pakāṇūr.”

As regards the third inscription, he thinks that Kōṭu kōṭalaku may be taken to mean the excavator of caves; Itātāven Cēṭuṭān is the proper name of a person of which the first element occurs in the second inscription. Cēṭuṭān is perhaps associated with Sreṣṭhi ‘a merchant’ ātaṇ being a personal ending with the euphonic particle at.

He translates the inscription as follows:

“This is the cave of Itātāvin Cēṭuṭān, the excavator of caves.”

He also notes that in these three epigraphs the word lēṇ is met with twice and uḷāsaka ends with the masculine suffix Ɲ, and that in the word kōṭu only the letter Ɲ is used instead of a double one.

At the end of the second and third inscriptions are found two symbols of which the first has in its centre a small circle to which is attached both at the top and the bottom, the straight arm of a hook bent at the right side, which K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks, may be taken to represent Om. The second symbol is a rectangle enclosing an upright cross similar to the ones found in the caverns of Ceylon, and is taken as representing the svastika mark, usually found in Buddhist inscriptions and tablets.

Narayana Rao adopts the reading of Krishna Sastrī with a slight emendation in reading the letter ūtu of the Cētu in the third inscription as ṭṭa.

(i) Kuṭū koṭāpilavana uṇac auna u pāṭūva

with its restoration in Sanskrit as

ОРаСУ = a Kuṭū koṭāpilavan upadhyayananam

meaning.

"ОРаСУ'а had this excavation cut for the treasure."

(ii) Pakaṇa = ūra pē (a) lāna pītana italavi pōna restoring it in Sanskrit as

Pakaṇa'ūra vrddhanam danam
pītakanam hitarthaḥ pō (pro ?) lanam

and translating the passage as the gift of the elders of Pakaṇa'ūra for the good (welfare, upkeep) of the 'baskets of books' (the collections of the sacred Buddhist scriptures) of the boys or pupils (the collection of sacred books or scriptures which have been displaced or got confused in arrangement)."

(iii) Kuṭū koṭalaku italavi na cetta'ā lāna lēna

the restoration of which in Sanskrit would be

Koṣṭham koṣṭhagara-kriś hitarthaḥ; Jñāna-streṣṭhaya
danam layanam

meaning:

"the apartment for the benefit of the library; the cave the gift of Jñāna-streṣṭha."

The actual readings of the inscriptions are as follows:

I. Ku tu ko ṭu pi tā va ṇa u pā ca
   a va a pā ṭu va

Krishna Sastrī reads the second letter as ūtu while Subrahmanya Ayyar reads it as ṭu. The former however, notes that this letter, (as also the sixteenth letter) is
different from the usual form (e.g. the fourth letter). But Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the sixteenth letter as \(ru\). Both of them appear to be \(ru\). The last letter has been read as \(va\) and this will indicate that the record is incomplete. So Subrahmanya Ayyar supplies the suffix \(u\), indicating third person nominative singular to complete the sentence. Krishna Sastri thinks that it is not unlikely that it is part of a punctuation found in the other two records.

The restoration of the inscription in Drāviḍi will be:

\[Kuru\ Koṭulpilavan Upacaañ Uparuuva.\]

The first word \(Kuru\) is evidently the same as the Tamill word \(kuru\) meaning section or division and probably it denotes here the particular section or bed. \(Koṭulpilavan\) is the same as \(koṭulpilavan\) with single \(p\) and \(t\) instead of the double as required by the rules of formation. We find the word \(upacaam\) in the Kilavelavu record also, and is the same as \(upāsaka\), with which is probably connected the word \(uvaccañ\). The whole record may be treated as:

"The lay disciple (upacaan) Uparuvan of Kurukoṭu, the person who donated."

Alternatively the label may be read as follows:

\[Kurukoṭu pitavan ū paca—an ūparuva.\] Kurukoṭu may either mean the name of a place or the lower summit or smaller hill.

\(Pitavān\) is very likely connected with the word \(pita\) or \(pī\), and thus means a father. Evidently it denotes like \(antai\) the Holy Father.

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4. The former two forms are again found in the third label.
5. Krishna Sastri has taken the second letter as \(tū\) with medial vowel \(u\) long, thus differentiating it from the fourth letter \(mu\) where medial vowel \(u\) short occurs. But the word \(kuṭu\) does not make any sense; and there is also no such word.
6. Two horizontal strokes indicative of the \(a\) long symbol appear to be added to the right of this letter, thus making it \(va\) to be read in Drāviḍi as \(va\).
Upacaṇṭ stands for upasaka, the lay devotee and uparūpa for his name.

Then the whole record may be translated as Upruva, the lay devotee of the Holy Father of Kuṭukōtu.

II. "Pa ka na ā ra pi ta i [a] na pi ta na i ta tu ve po na"

Krishna Sastri has read the sixth letter as pi while Subrahmanya Ayyar read it as po. The fifteenth letter has been read as ta by both the scholars. Its similarity with the ninth letter of the next label is striking. Two a long symbols are found to its right at the top. Further there appears also a horizontal stroke at the bottom to the right suggestive of the medial vowel ā. Two a long symbols are also found attached to the seventh letter ta.

Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the penultimate letter of this label is damaged and prefers to take it as le with the right arm much worn out while Krishna Sastri has read it as po. But the photograph does not support Subrahmanya Ayyar's reading. This letter is clear enough and cannot be read otherwise than po. The last word is definitely pom, whatever its meaning may be.

The word pom means gold; and it also denotes Mount Mēru, as also one of the three mountains destroyed by God Sīva in his aspect of Tripurāntaka. The mythical story of Sīva's burning of the three cities is explained as depicting the victory of the Brahmanical faith over heretical ones—Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism. It is possible that the Gold mountain destroyed by Lord Sīva belongs to one of these religions, bearing a name

7. Strictly the name Upacana should have the masculine suffix of an, thus having the form Uparvan. Or as surmised by Krishna Sastri va may after all form part of the punctuation. Possibly the reading and interpretation offered by Subrahmanya Ayyar may be preferred.

8. The sixth letter read as pi may also be read as po, as it has an arm to its left at the top. In fact Krishna Sastri has read this letter as ps. There is also a small arm to the right in the middle of the first line of pa, thus having two a long symbols.
sacred to them. The word *pon* found here may be in reminiscence of the same.

The word *pon* (with the medial vowel *o* long) is used in the sense of a trap in the standard orthodox commentary known as the *Iṣa*, on the sacred Vaiṣṇava literature in Tamil, the *Nalayiradivya Prabandham*.

The Tamil Lexicon gives the meaning of the word as "cave running into the side of a hill." Probably the word is to be taken as denoting a cavern.

The record is to be restored in Dravīḍi as:

**Pakan-ūr Potata Pitān Ita Tūve *pon***.

*Pakan-ūr* is evidently the name of the place *Tūve* which is obviously connected with a bunch of peacock feathers. *Pitān* seems to be the name of a person. In classical Tamil literature we come across the name *piṭantai* (*Pitān + tantai*) as the name of a person. This word occurs also in the Pugalūr record. On the analogy of *antai* (*Alaṅ + tantai*) *Pitān* also becomes a name.

The word *Ita tūve* is found in the form of *ita tūvin* in the next label. Very likely the word *ita* occurring in the first label at Ariṭṭāpatṭi and the inscription at Sittannavāgai is also connected with this. Evidently *ita* is the same as *ida* found in the Brahmī inscriptions of Western India as the Prākṛt form of the word Indra.

**III Ku ṛu ko ṭa la ku i ṭa tu a [vi] na ce ṛu a ṭa na ṁo na**

Both Krishna Sastri and Subrahmanya Ayyar have read the penultimate letter as *l* thus taking the word as *lena* or *layana*, meaning a cave. The right arm of the letter required to make it *la* is not clear. Hence it is preferable to take it as *pōna* or *pon* as in the preceding label.

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9. It is also possible to read the word as *tāve*. But the word does not make any sense.
Ceru Atan denotes the name of a person. (It is also possible to take the letter ce as ci. Then it would become ciru meaning small. Ciru Atan would then mean Atan, the small or junior. But the word ciru does not appear to have been used in this sense in early days).

The label is to be restored in Dravidian as:

*Kuru koṭalku ita tūvin Ceru Atan pōn*

Tūvin probably means a person having a bunch of (peacock) feathers, and ita stands for Indra. These have been found in the previous label.

The interpretation of the terms Kuru koṭalku etc. discussed in the first label may equally apply here.

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10. It is possible to read this word as *tūvin*. But it does not make any sense.
The places is near Solavandan in the Madurai-District. On the top of a hillock in the Nāgamalai chain, a mile to the south of the hamlet, there is a natural cavern facing south and giving a good view of the surrounding country. Locally the cave is known as Unḍan kal. The height of this natural recess is, except at the opening, not much and so to move about in it with ease is difficult. The floor is rugged and sloping inwards. Narrow stone beds have been cut into the rock on the floor with low depression in two rows of four and eight respectively, close to the uneven rocky walls on either side. In some cases a few beds have been partitioned off from each other by their ridges running the whole length of the beds. There are no pillow-losits in stone for these beds; but on the pillow side of three of them labels in the Brāhmi script have been incised. The characters have been assigned to the third or second century B.C. The stone beds at the cave are also referred to by the name Unḍan kallu.

Krishna Sastri has not discussed these records in his paper as they were discovered and copied only after he wrote.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar has not given the text of the three inscriptions exactly as found on the stone, but only the text as amended by him.

I. Antai Pikan mahan ven tana

This bed is the gift of Vēn, the son of Pikan.

He also adds that it is not improbable that Antai is a part of the word Pikan, in which case we must suppose that the inscription only gives the name of the occupant of the bed.

II and III. The other two are taken by him as one record:

Potilai Kuviiran: Vēn Kuviira Koṭupilan

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1. Nos. 621 to 623 of 1926.
In this the first section has been taken by him as the name of the occupant of the cave while the second is translated as "Vēn Kuvirān had it cut."

In the absence of either the inked impression or the actual reading of the records Narayana Rao presumed that the original should have been

(i) a na tāi pi ka na ma ka na vē na ta na
(ii) pō ti lai ku vī ra na ku vī ra na ko ṭu pi la

and restored them in Sanskrit as follows:

anyad dēyam bhikṣùnam mahatam Vaiśyanam daṇani; pūtraḥ Kuberānām vaiśyanam Kuberānām koṭṭapita (u). "Another gift for the bhikṣus; the gift of the great householders, the merchants; the sons of Kubēras, the merchant (house-holder)—Kubēras, had it cut."

He thus took all the three as forming one record.

The following is the actual transcription of these records as found engraved on the rock:

(i) a na tāi ya pi ka na ma
   k [a] na vē na a ta na

Of the fifteen letters which make this record the four from the ninth to the twelfth are slightly damaged. The middle arm of the letter ka (1.9) at the left, as also the two long symbols at the right are not clear. The letter may also be read as ru. In the eleventh letter, which has been read as vē, the symbol for the vowel e is found attached to the vertical line in the middle (and not at the top as is usually found) and also projected to the right which would make it vō. The twelfth letter na has got two arms at the right to signify a long.

I. In accordance with the system adopted for studying the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription the record has to be read as

Antai y Pikan makan vēna Atn

It has been pointed out earlier that the word antai should be treated as antai with the initial vowel shortened and that the

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word antai formed with the combination of the two words anta and tantai would mean the Holy Father Atan. The word Atan which is similarly the same as Atan with the initial vowel shortened is derived from the Sanskrit word Apta and is taken as suggestive of a follower of the Ajivika faith.

This short record may be translated as follows:

Ven Atan, son of Antai Pikan.

II. Po ta lai ku vi ra [na]

The last letter ra cannot be made out clearly from the photograph:

This record has to be restored as Potilai Kuviran.

Kuviran is another word in many inscription at Siddharimalai. The masculine singular suffix a to this word indicates it as the name of a male person. Evidently it is the Tamil form of the word Kubara, the name of the Yaksha chief and lord of wealth.

Potilai, given as an adjective appears to be the name of the place to which Kuviran belonged. The name is suggestive of Potiyil, Potikai and Potiyam, the various names by which the podiyil hills, reputed to be the seat of sage Agastya, are known.

III. Ce na ku vi ra na

The word kotupita added at the end of this section by K.V. Subrahmanya Ayyar in not found in the photograph of the impression.

The first letter which has been read by him as vē looks more like ce. The second one which has been read as na does not have the base drawn on the left side also. It looks more like the form of na found in the Trial alphabets of the Brahmi script found at Gaya and reproduced by Bühler in his Indian Palaeography.

III. This record may be restored as Cenkuviran (S'enku-
viran).

It may be split as Cen and Kuviran meaning 'Kuviran
(Kubera) who is righteous.'

Thus all the three labels found in this place give out only
the names of persons, who were either responsible for the making
of the beds, or more probably were occupying them.
This is the highest hill in the Tamil country on which we find caverns, beds and Brāhmi inscriptions. Those on the other hills may not be said to be at any great height, though in most cases they are also inaccessible. At the foot of the Alagarmalai range, 13 miles from Madurai and four miles from the village of Kiḍāripaṭṭi, is a big cavern very difficult of access, but having in it a good number of beds of varying sizes, and provided with a clear rock spring of ice-cold water in one corner of the cavern. It has a spacious front of fifty yards and more in breadth on which are made holes and a drain to carry off the rain water falling from the drip ledge. The inscriptions in the cavern are eight in number. One of these is written on the pillow side of a stone bed. The rest are chiselled on the brow of the sheltering rock, thirty five feet above the floor. In the cavern is an image of Ajjanāndi or a Tirthankara cut by Ajjanāndi with an invocatory Vaṭṭeluttu inscription below it. The approach to the cavern which is most difficult is through a thick jungle and narrow ravines intercepted by steep rocks, now, however, made easier by the Archaeological Survey of India.

There are on the whole nine labels in the cavern. ¹

Krishna Sastri has read the inscriptions thus:

1. Ma [ta] ti [rai] yi pō na ku
   [a va na a [ta] na a t [a] na

2. M [a] ta ti rai ko [pa] pu va
   ni ka na

3. ya ka na kō na ti ka na

4. ka na ka a t [a] na m [ō] ka
   na a ta na a ta na

5. Sa [ma] mi si na mi ta ti

¹. See MER, 70—79 of 1910.
6. Ru pa ni ti va ni [ka] na na ḍu ma la na

7. [Va ni] ka na yu la ni ta na

8. Ci ka ṭhā ma ṭu na ta na ta ra a ni y [a] k [o] tu pō ta a va na


He notes that the expression *Malatirai* occurs both in the first and second labels, and in the former an extra consonant *y* after *rai* which is a feature of Tamil orthography (seen also in *Ariṭṭapatti* label 5 when compared with the 4th in the same). *Vanikan* appears in the second, sixth and seventh labels; and probably this has to be connected with the Sanskrit *vaṇik* or the Tamil *vaṇiyaṉ* or *vaṇikan*. Of the symbols used here for punctuation the *svasika* is familiar. The last two inscriptions are probably fragmentary since they do not end with any mark of punctuation. He also points out that there is space for one letter which has been left blank between the letters *na* and *mi* in the fifth label. The same is also seen between the syllables *ru* and *pa* in the sixth label.

Subrahmanya Ayyar says that the order of the Aḷagarmalai inscriptions has to be studied on the spot, and that he has transcribed and interpreted as much of them as could be read in a line: He leaves the first five labels, begins only with *vaṇikan* of the sixth label and reads the rest as follows:

*Vaṇikan* *Neđumalai* 6 = *Vaṇikan* *yuṇalai* 6 = *Cikarāmāṟan* *tana* 6 = *Tāraṇi* *Kūṭippilavavan* *anakāṇam*

He thinks that the first two have to be taken as the names of the persons that occupied the cave. The next part means: “This is the gift of *Cikarāmāṟan*. As a common noun *Cikara-māṟan* means “the glorious carpenter.” What follows, according to him, may be taken to mean. “Tāra kanī caused the cave and the drain to be made.” He also notes that in the previous portion not transcribed by him, *Mattirai* (Madirai) occurs several times
and also the names of two persons who were *poukulavaya* and *Kulavanikan*, "dealers in gold and grains."

Narayana Rao follows Krishna Sastri in reading the labels, and interprets them as follows:

1. **Matatiraiyi—pōṇa Kulavāṇa atana’ā tana**

   the Sanskrit restoration of which is

   "Maṭharaki—paṭraṇam (?) paṭraṇam (?) Kulaṇaṇam adana[a]ya [asthanaya (?) asṭhanaya (?)] danani"

   meaning

   "the gift of the sons (grandsons ?) of Maṭharaki, the heads of the guild (*kula*), for food (for the guild ?)"

2. **Matatirai-ko pāpu vaṇikana**

   with the Sanskrit restoration as

   **Maṭharaki—krte pāpu, vaṇijam**

   meaning

   "the gift for the guild of Maṭharaki given by the chiefs of the villages of the merchants."

   He takes *pāpu* as the Paisaci Prakṛti form of *vaṇava*, a Deśi word for Ayukta or grama-mukhya, an official, the headman of a village. (*Deśinamamalī, 7.55*).

3. **Yakana Konatikanza**

   restored in Sanskrit as

   **Yakṣanam Gonardikanam**

   meaning

   "the gift of the merchants (*yakṣa*s) who trade in bulls (who belong to the Gonarda guild; who come from the Gonarda hill."
4. Narayana Rao takes this label as composed of two items:
   (a) *Kāṇaka’a tana*
   rendered in Sanskrit as
   \[Gaṇakasya dānānī\]
   and meaning
   the gift of the accountant.
   (b) *mokṣana atana’a tana*
   rendered in Sanskrit as
   \[mokṣanām asihana ya dānānī\]
   and meaning
   "gifts for the institution of states of relief (from pain)."

(5 & 6) "*Sama misina milati rupa nīti vanikana nāṭta-malana*"
   of which the Sanskrit restoration is
   "samaya-miśreṇa maśtri-rūpa nīytiḥ
   vanijāma naṣṭa malanām"
   meaning
   "The vow in the form of friendship mixed with
   faith in the samaya or Buddhist Dharma of the
   merchants who have their malas or impunities
   of the soul destroyed."

(7 & 8) "*Vanikana yula natana Cikattha—
   malana tana*"
   with its Sanskrit restoration as
   "Vanijāma yūtha (-yula)—nathanam Śrī-Kaṁṭha (Cikattha-) māṭrṇam dānānī"
   meaning
   "The gift of the merchants, the chiefs of the
   guilds (of the yula guild?) of the Śrī-Kaṁṭha-
   māṭr-gaṇa (Cikattha-māṭr-gaṇa)."
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(8 & 9) tara' aniya kotu pōla a vanəa nakana

the Sanskrit restoration of which is
daraka-ganika Kotṭapita avanaya nagininam

meaning

"The beloved of the excavator (had this) cut for the protection of the Naginis."

He also adds that the Nagas and Naginis are frequently met with in Buddhist literature.

A perusal of these records would show that, like the Siddharmalai and Muttuppatṭi epigraphs, all these register only the names of either recluses for whom the beds in the caverns were designed, or the persons who caused them to be made.

I. The first record reads:

Ma [ta] ti [rai] yi po ṇa ku la
va ṇa a [ta] ṇa a t [a] ṇa

In Dravidi it has to be restored as

Mattiraiy Pon Kulavan atan atan

The first word Mattiraiy occurs also in the second label without the suffix y which is only a superfluous letter, and represents the place name Matirai i.e. the modern Madurai, not far from the place where the record is found. It is well known that Madurai is known as Southern Madurai (Tem Madurai) to distinguish it from northern Mathura, (Vada Madurai) the present Muttra, having the second letter of the ta varga. The double tta has been evidently used in the present record only to express the second tha. The form Matirai for this place occurs in Tamil inscriptions; e.g. the Cōla inscriptions refer to Parântaka I as Parakēsari who captured Matirai and Iḷam or Ceylon (Matiraiyum Iḷamum koṇḍa Köp-Parakēsari).

Pon-Kulavan means merchant trading in gold. Atan Atan denotes the name of the person Atan, son of Atan.
The inscription means:

Atan son of Atan, the gold merchant of Matirai (had this made).

(The photograph of this inscription is not available)

II. This label reads:

M [a] ta ti rai Ko [pa] pu va ni ka va

In Dravida this becomes

Matirai Koppu vanikan

The word vanikan is preceded by three letters ko p pu which mean a flower shaped women’s ear ornament worn at the top of the helix. The inscription would mean the koppu merchant of Matirai.

III. The actual reading of the label is:

vi ya ka va ka na ti ka va

It is to be restored in Dravida as

Viyakan Kanatikan

Viyakan seems to be the name of a person. Kanati means a kind of Indian Oak. Kanatikan may mean one dealing in a variety of wood.

The inscription may mean Viyakan, a merchant dealing in timber, like Oak.

IV. The inscription reads:

Ka na ka a t [a] na m [e] ka va
a ta na a ta va

Very likely the seventh letter is me and not mo.

In Dravida the inscription is to be read as:

Kanaka Alan makes Alan

The first word is evidently Kanakkar from the Sanskrit ganaka meaning one who is well-versed in the philosophy of P—81
religion or in any science. Cf. *Camaya-k-kaṇikkar tam tiran kēṭta katalai* in *Maṇimekalai*; also Kaṇakkayar.

The famous poet Nakkarar, author of the *Tirumurugāṟṟup. pātai*, one of the Palluppattu (Ten Idylls) is known as Madurai-k-Kaṇakkayangar magangar Nakkarar (i.e. Nakkarar son of the Kaṇakkayangar of Madurai).

The inscription will mean:

*Atan son of Atan*, the (Kaṇakknu) learned.

V. The fifth label reads:

*Sā p [a] mi [si] na mi ta ti.*

As mentioned earlier there is some blank space between the fifth and sixth letters, i.e. *na* and *mi*. The occurrence of *Sa* twice in this label once as *sa* and again as *si* shows that the words comprised are not in the Tamil language. Most probably the words are of *Prakrit* origin. Perhaps it has to be restored in Dravīḍi as:

*Sāpanisin mitti.*

Very likely the last word *mitti* is connected with the word *middha* meaning ‘sleep’ (or *mithya*, the name of a spirit or demi-god of the Jains — *Saṅkha*).

It is possible that the suffix *in* immediately preceding this word represents the fifth case ending in Tamil, though it should correctly be *in* with *’n* (n and not *n*). It is also possible to read the word as *Sammisin*. It does not however make any sense. May be it refers to a person.

VI. The actual reading of the sixth label is:

*pā nī ti vā nī [ka] na ne tu ma la na*

Krishna Sastri says that there is a letter *ru* at the beginning and that some blank space has been left after that before chiselling

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1. The Tamil word *mettai* meaning a bed made of cotton or down as also the storey or a building for sleeping.

2. Two names *Mita* and *Saminid* are mentioned as representing different forms of Vīnāyya. (See R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaishnavism* *Saivism* and *Minor Religions*, p. 145).
the next letter \( \rho\alpha \). The symbol which has been read as \( \text{ru} \) is found very close to the punctuation mark at the close of the previous label. Perhaps it forms part of the punctuation mark. Tamil words do not begin with the letter \( \text{ru} \) as the initial.

The label inscription will be restored in Drāvīḍi as:

**Paṇīṭī Vaṇiṅkaṉ Neṭumalaṉ**

The first word paṇīṭī means adorning, adornment, decoration. So paṇīṭī vaṇiṅkaṉ would mean merchant trading in beauty articles like jewels and ornaments. Neṭumalaṉ is the name of a person. It may be Malan the senior. The whole label may be translated as:

Neṭumalaṉ the merchant in beauty articles.

**VII. The reading of this label is:**

*Ko ḻu va ni ka na yu \( \text{\ alpha} \) [ca] na la na*

The fifth letter has been read as \( \text{yu} \) both by Krishna Sastri and Subrahmanya Ayyar. The bottom stroke indicating the medial vowel \( u \) will be added to the \( \text{ya} \) only at the right and it will not be added so as to form a prolongation of the middle line. This will become clear by comparing this letter with the letter \( \text{yu} \) occurring in the Anamalai inscription. Again both the scholars have not read any letter between \( \text{\ alpha} \) and \( na \). But the photograph shows traces of the letter \( va \).

The inscription will be restored in Drāvīḍi as:

*Ko ḻu vaṇiṅkaṉ yuḷa caṇaḷaṉ*

*Koḷu* means a bar of metal, plough share etc. Koḷuvaṇiṅkaṉ may be taken to mean a merchant dealing in koḷu. Uḷācēndan is probably the name of the person.

The inscription may be translated as:

Uḷācēndan, a merchant dealing in iron goods like plough-share etc.

**VIII.** Krishna Sastri has read the inscription as a single record while Subrahmanya Ayyar has read it as two labels with
the punctuations the middle dividing the two. But no such mark is seen in the photograph, if what has actually been read by both the scholars as ṭāra are only the marks of punctuation.

The whole record reads as follows:

\[ Ci \, Ka \, [ru] \, pi \, ra \, na \, ta \, na \]
\[ a \, ni \, [ya] \, ko \, ū \, pi \, ta \, va \, na \]

The third letter of the label is very badly shaped. Both the readings ṭṭha by Krishna Sastri and ra by Subrahmanya Ayyar cannot be sustained. The present reading of the symbol as ū is also doubtful.

The label may be read in Drāviḍi as:

(a) Cikaru piranṭañ

(b) Aniya Koṭupita vaṇa

Obviously the label records that the drip line (ṭaṇṇi) for the cave was made by one who was probably born at a place called Cikaru.

IX. This inscription reads:

\[ a \, na \, ka \, ve \, ūna \]

The occurrence of the letter ūna at the end clearly shows that the record is not complete and some letter at the end have been lost. The fragmentary nature of the record does not admit of any interpretation.
This village about nine and a half miles from the Pudukkottai town is famous for a Jaina rock-out temple on hill near the village usually assigned to the seventh century, but probably assignable to a later period, and the beautiful fresco paintings in it. At an almost inaccessible height in another part of the hill there is a natural cavern formed of a cleft which divides the overhanging top portion from the rocky floor below. The spot where the cavern lies is generally known as ēḷadīpatīm on account of the seven (ēḷu) square holes which are used as steps for reaching the cavern. Seventeen beds are chiselled in the cavern. Some of the stone beds are damaged; but all of them are provided with a raised portion at one end, which was obviously meant to serve as a pillow. Round the top and left side of one of the seventeen beds in the cavern is a Brāhmi inscription,\(^1\) which is in a good state of preservation. There are also found a few inscriptions on the adjoining beds written in early Tamil characters of about the eighth century A.D. They contain the names of six individuals, who were probably mendicants who had resolved to spend the last years of their lives in retired seclusion. The name are Toḷakurippalī Kaḍavulaṇ, Tirunilai, Tiruppurāṇaṇ, Tīṭṭaiycaṇaṇ, Tiruccāṭlaṇ add Śrī Purāṇa-Caudirāṇ Nīyattakaraṇ Paṭṭakkāl.

Krishna Sastri has read the Brāhmi inscription as follows:

E u mi nā t [u] ku mu ṭṭha [u] ra
pi ḍa na ta vu ṭi i le nā ku
ci ṭā pō ci la i la ya ra ce ya
ṭō a ti ṭa a nā ma

He thinks that the words nāṭu and āra might indicate the district and village names respectively.

Subrahmanya Ayyar treats the letters ra of āra, nā of itena, la of pōcilā, ra of ilayara, ya of ceyata, ta, na and ma of

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aṭṭaṇama (the 10th, 20th, 26th, 30th, 32nd, 36th and 39th letters) as basic consonants, and reads the inscription as follows:

Eōmi.ṇatu Kumāṭhūr pirṭaṇa
Kauḍi Itenku Cīṭupocil Ilaṭar ceyta
aṭṭhanam.¹

He has also made slight emendations in the above reading. The second letter is read by him as the vowel o instead of u. The medial o of the seventh letter mu and the medial o of the 33rd letter to have been dropped, and he treats them only as consonant letters with inherent a. He further notes: "Here Eōminaṭu is the name of a territorial division and Kumāṭūr that of a village as clearly indicated by the endings nadu and ār. Pirṭaṇa has to be supplied as usual with the final a and the permultimate length shortened: it becomes piranta, which means "one who was born." Kauḍi Itenku is a proper name in the dative case. Cīṭupocil may be the name of a village. As in Piranta the penultimate of Ilaṭar has to be shortened, its modern equivalent being itaṭyar. To ceyta we have to supply i.

The meaning is clearly the following:

Cīṭupocil Ilaṭar made this anhiṭṭhanam for Kauḍi Iten who was born at Kumūṭṭūr a village in Eōminadu."

He also notes that the long na is clearly indicated in the inscription by a straight horizontal stroke marked on the right side of na as distinguished from the inverted ' J ' symbol used in the epigraph to denote na and after a brief discussion comes to the conclusion that the word adiṭṭhana in the record must refer to the monastery where Baudhā-Bhikṣus practised the vows pertaining to their order.

Narayana Rao has grouped the letters as follows:

E'uni-naṭṭa Kumuttūra-pitṭana
ṭa-ka vuti itenaku Cīṭapocila
Ilaṭa-ṛcēyato aṭṭanama

2. op. cit., pp. 296-8.
—restores the same in Sanskrit as:

E'umi-nattā Kumutt'ha' āra piṭakanam
tranakṛti vṛddhi-hitena-kṛte Simhala-
rajyataḥ adhiṣṭhanam

and translates it as "An institution of Kumutt'ha āra in E'uminnāṭṭa from the Kingdom of Ceylon for the protection and with the wish of the increase of the Piṭakas (the three baskets or collections of Buddhist scriptures)."

C. Sivaramamurti reads the label as follows:

Eumi naṭu Kumuttu āra piṟantā
Kavudā i I te na ku
Ci ṭu po ci la I la ya ra de ya ta a ti la a na ma

and translates it as:

Ciṟuபocil Ilaiyar made this adhiṣṭhanam for Kavudi Ilēn who was born at Kumattūr, a village in Eominnaktu.  

K. R. Srinivasan says about the inscription:

"The inscription with slight corrections would read:

Eōmi naṭṭu (Oyma naṭṭu) Kumattūr piṟantān
kavudi (Kavidī) Ilēnukku
Ciṟu počil Ilaiyar ceyla aditṭanam

and translates it as:

"Unto Kavidī Ilēn (I tên bearing the title of Kavidī) a native of Kumattūr in Eōmi (Oyma) naṭu (district), the aditṭanam made by Ilaiyar of Ciṟuபocil."

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3. Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Scripts, p. 158.
As pointed out earlier, following the principle adopted in the decipherment and study of the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscriptions the words read as piṇṭāṇa and ceyṭa by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, treating them as verbs and supplying the final members n and ā respectively, have to be read as piṇṭāṇa and ceyṭa (the single ā symbol added to the consonant making it the consonant with the inherent a and not ā long), the adjectival participle meaning 'who was born in' and 'which was made by' respectively. That this is the correct method to be adopted for reading this record is indicated by the penultimate letter read as na, having one symbol of ā long added to it, while the fourth letter read as na has two symbols added to it at the right.

The eighth letter read as thū has a projection to the left at the bottom of the downward stroke indicating the medial vowel u short; and this has been tentatively taken as indicating the actual reading of the record is:

E o mi na ṭu ku mu thū u ra pi ra n tā
Ka vu ti i te na ku ci ru po ci la
i la ya ra ce ya t [a] a ti ṭa a na ma.

It has to be read in Drāviḍi as:

Eomi natu kumusṭhu ur piṇṭanta kavutti
itetku Cīrupocil īlayar ceyṭta atīṭa-anam

Eōmināḍu has been usually identified with the territory round about the modern Tindivanam in the South Arcot district known in ancient times as Oyōmāṇāḍu. It has also been suggested that the area bore another name i.e. Erumāṇāḍu. But there is no evidence to connect Erumāṇāḍu with the Tindivanam area. Further the region does not appear to have had much connection with the Sittannavāsal area. In the Ernad taluk of the Kolikode district in the Kerala State there was a division called Ōmayānaṇāḍu in which there was a village by name Uinaṭṭīr. It is possible that Kumāṭṭīr mentioned in the inscription under study was the same as Umaṭṭīr. It that be so, then it may be taken that the place was in the present Kerala State.

6. T.A.S., Vol. III, pp. 198-99; See also A.S. Duraiswami Pillai, Chera-
The word *Kavuṭi* should mean one born in or hailing from a place or territory called *Kavuṭa*. It is not known where this *Kavuṭa* was. It is difficult to identify it with the *gauḍa-dēya* a part of modern West Bengal for two reasons. For one thing it is doubtful if the person who is said to have been born in *Kumāṭhūr* in the *Eominaṟu* in the Tamil country could have come all the way to that place and settled down there at such an early period. For another thing it is very doubtful if the name *Gauḍa* was current at such an early date. Therefore it must stand to reason to identify *Kavuṭa* with some place in the Tamil country itself bearing a similar name. Or can the word be another form of the title *Kavīti*, a title conferred by the *Pāṇḍya* kings in the *Sangam* age on some of the *Veḻaḷas* and leading men. It was the ancient practice to mention the title denoting caste or profession, father's name and native place before giving the name of a person and probably in accordance with that practice the title is given here before the name of the person. But it seems that the word *Kavuṭi* cannot be derived from the word *Kavīti*.

The word *iteku* is very likely *iteṇ* with the suffix *ku* indicating the fourth or dative case in Tamil added to it. Then it will mean 'to *Iteṇ* in which case *Iteṇ* would become a proper name. The word cannot be the official suffix of a chieftain or ruler (cf. *Āṭay*). If it is so taken, it may not be possible to explain how or why an *adhiśṭhānam* was made for him.

*Iṭa* as a proper name appears also in the Ariṭṭapattī record. In the *Nāṅghat* inscription of queen *Naganikā* we find the word *Iḍa* where it has been taken as the *Prakṛt* form of Indra or Imdra. Most probably *Iṭa* of these Brahmi records is the same as *Iḍa* of the *Nāṅghat* inscription and has to be taken as standing for Indra. If the word is taken to be a proper name

7. See Tol. Por. 30. *µr̥[i].

8. The *Tolkappiyam* lays down the following rule about the practice:

Drum peyaru mu daittoīr karuviyum
yōruṇcāti yavaiyavai perumē
t-(Tol. Marupu. 74. *pēr*.)

9. See Arch. Survey of Western India, Vol. V. pp. 64 ff.

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Kavuṭi Iteṇku may be interpreted either as Iteṇ hailing from Kavuṭi or Iteṇ, who bore the title of Kavuṭi (Kavili).

It is possible that Cirupocil was the name of a place. Very probably it was the ancient name of Sittanānavaśal itself. In some inscriptions of a later period the place is referred to as Sittanānal-Vayil, meaning the abode of Arhats and Siddhas. Cirupocil may be a still older name. Pocil may be derived from the two words pocu (poccai-hill) and il (abode) meaning the abode on the hill or the word may be derived from the term vassā-vāsal meaning again an abode or place. Thus the whole word may be taken to mean the hill where the Siddhas lived.

The word Iṭayar may be taken to be the name of a person or simply a young person (Iṭaṭyar). The interchange of ai into a is usual in the Tamil language.¹⁰

Atitaanam obviously is adhisthanam and may be taken to mean, as suggested by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar as “a dwelling place or abode” “where one spends his life in fulfilment of a vow or resolution once taken.”

The whole inscription may be translated as:

Cirupocil Iṭayar made this adhisthanam for Kavuṭi Iteṇ, who was born at Kumuthūr in the Eominaḍu.

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¹⁰. The term is taken to refer to a forest tribe known as Majavar. It is also said that it is from this tribe that Karikala the great (Cola king) after the conquest of their forest kingdoms seems to have recruited most of his army. (K. N. Sivaraja Pillai Chronology of the Ancient Tamils, p. 61 fn; Inscriptions in the Puddukkottai state, (English Translation) p. 3. But it is better to take the word as the name of a person, particularly because he is mentioned as Iṭayar of Cirupocil, meaning Iṭayar belonging to or hailing from Cirupocil, obviously a place.
This place near Madurai is famous for its shrine of God Subrahmanya, which itself is a rock-cut one containing early inscriptions. The hill at the place is sacred to the Muslims also on account of the Sicandar mosque on its summit. It is important to the Jains too, who consider it as one of the eight hills sacred to them. The cavern containing the Brāhmī inscription under discussion is situated at an inconvenient place on the steep western side of the hill near the present Tirupparankunram Railway Station and the village Ṣavāḍi; and it can be reached by ascending the crude foot-holds cut into the rock. It measures 56 feet in length north to south, 20 feet in depth and 5 feet 10 inches in height in the centre, and can afford shelter to a large number of people from sun, wind and rain. The brow of the hill is cut to a small depth to prevent rain water from getting into the cavern. In front of the vault are bored some holes evidently meant for fixing poles and rails. Not far off is a spring of cool water. Within the cavern there are six beds. A cutting of the rock on the pillow side of the beds contains a clearly incised inscription in Brāhmī characters. The one peculiar feature of this cavern is that it has too low benches measuring 5 feet by 1 foot 9½ inches and the other 6 feet by 3 feet. In another part of the same hill, i.e. on its northern side, there is another small cave with two beds, but without any inscription.

The inscription\(^1\) in the former cave is in a good state of preservation, and the letters in it which have been assigned to the first century B.C. are neatly incised. The record is made up of thirty-one letters written in two parts in a single line separated by a long vertical stroke. The letters in the first part are slightly bigger than those in the second, though written in the same hand, H. Krishna Sastri transcribed the inscription as follows:

**Section A**

\[ E \, ru \, k \, [\dot{o}] \, [\dot{\varepsilon}u \, ra] \, i \, jain \]
\[ ku \, [\dot{\varepsilon}u \, ma] \, [\dot{p}i \, ka] \, nz \, \dot{\theta}o \]
\[ l\z\l\, [\dot{a}i] \, ya \, na \]

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1. 333 of 1908.
Section B

C [e] ya 1a a ya ca
ya nā nai ūc [a] ta na

He is not sure of the reading of the seventh letter as jām on account of its peculiar formation. He thinks that its similarity with the Khalsi Aśokan ja given on Bühler's Tafel 11—15—2 is very slight, and it is somewhat like the modern Tamil ḍa. He also adds that the three letters read as ya in Section B are written somewhat irregularly and that the form of the letter ca has in both the cases a vertical tail below as in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription.

As regards the contents of the record he remarks that Eruķōṭura may stand for a place name like Eruķōṭtur and Kutumāpiḳa may be taken as kutumpiḳa (of which the Sanskrit form is kutumbika) occurring in the Pāli inscription and meaning a ‘husbandman’.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar reads the record as follows, treating as basic consonants all the final  ngaś and the ra of ūvara, the ma occurring before piḳa the ya's of ceya and aya and the ca of caya.

Eruķōṭtur Ila kutumpiḳaṇ Pōlalaiyan
ceykaa Ayçaṇ Nedu Čutan

He takes the two sections of the records to relate to two different parts or stages of the same transactions. In the first section there are three words. The first one is Eruķōṭtur taken as the name of a place as it is clearly indicated with the suffix ā. In fact Eruķōṭtur figures as the name of a place from which one of the Tamil poets, Taṇyan-Kaṇṇanar, hailed. Three of his verses are included in the collection. Ahaṇanāru. The next one Ila kutumpiḳaṇ would mean the husbandmen of Ilam or Ceylon

2. Proceedings of the Third All.India Oriental Conference, Madras, 1924 p.238. The word Pōlalaiyan is not found in the reading given there; but it has been included in the subsequent discussion. Evidently it is only an omission in the Text.

3. Aham verse 319, 319 and 357.
(derived from Simhaḷa-Sihaḷa-碘). The use of the first or hard ṁ instead of the third or soft b and the masculine ending am or u would clearly point out that this is a Tamil word. But the word碘 is given only with a short i 碘. The third one, Pōḷalaiyaṇ is a personal name. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the verb in this section has been omitted and quotes the parallel of No. 18 of the Inscription of Ceylon by Parker.

The first word of the second section ceyla is taken by him as the finite verb ceytan with the final u dropped, in the same way as, according to him, in the Marugāṭṭalai inscription. What follows has been taken by him as the name of the person who made it and restored it as Āditya Neḍuṇi-Sattan, treating the final u as dropped.

Thus he translates the record as:

"Pōḷalaiyaṇ, a husbandman of Ceylon, (and a resident) or Erukoṭṭur (caused to be cut) and Ācyana-Neḍuṇcaṭṭan made it."

The reading of Narayana Rao is:

(a) Erukoṭṭura Ila Kutumpihāna Pōḷalaiyana.
(b) Ceyla aya-cayana netu cālanā.

He takes it as Prākṛt and restores the same in Sanskrit as follows:

Eru Koṭira Simhaḷa-Kutumbi-Kanam Pōḷal-aryanam Caiya-Caīyanaṃ nīṭha caīyaṇam, and translates it as:

"The establishment of caiyas and groups of caiyas of (to, by) the citizens of Pōḷal, the dwellers of Ceylon, of Erukoṭṭura." He points out that 'Pōḷala' occurs as the name of the town in the Uvāsagadasāḥ and 'Polasādha' as the name of a garden in the Abhīdhana-rajendra.

The seventh letter which was read tentatively as jam by Krishna Sastri has been taken as iod by Subrahmanya Ayyar following the possibility suggested by the former. It should also be noted that the fifteenth letter iod of Pōḷalaiyan and ca the
twenty-ninth letter of the word catana have the symbols of a long added twice, and as such they have to be read only as long. There has not been much difference among these scholars in the reading of the inscription, but only in its interpretation.

The first section gives the name of the person, Pālaiyan, a kutumpikañ of Īlam and resident of Ērukottur. There is no need to supply a verb finite or infinite to this as has been done by Subrahmanya Ayyar on the assumption that it has been left out. This was rendered necessary because he took what followed ceyta in the second section as the personal name of a different person. There is no need for this assumption. The construction of the sentence also does not permit of such an interpretation. As in the Marugātalai inscription the word ceyta is an adjectival participle meaning ‘made.’ Hence what follows this word could only mean the object of the grant (i.e.) what has been granted. Narayana Rao takes this portion to mention the establishment of a group of caityas. No caitya is seen there. There are only rock-cut beds in the cavern. And nowhere is the word caitya known to have been used in the sense of a bed. In the expression āya-cayana-negu catana, the last component part catana may be taken as the rendering of the Sanskrit word sadhana meaning ‘meditation.’ The adjective negu qualifying it would mean ‘long’ or ‘deep.’ Thus negucatana may be taken to mean long or deep meditation. Cayana is obviously the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word sayana, meaning a bed. The word āya at the beginning is difficult to explain. It was probably this word that made the previous scholars resort to other interpretations.

The Pingalantai Nikantu gives a Tamil word āyvai as meaning a sleeping place, though the word is not found either in other nīghantu or in literature. It has been seen earlier that Tamil words with meanings having no literary usage, but given in the Pingalantai are found used as such in inscriptions. Further that the word āy should have the meaning of sleep can be deduced from the lullaby of the cradle song in Tamil, the very common and popular burden of which runs as ‘lol-lol-lol-loll-āyi.’

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4. Tamil Lexicon, Sv. āyvai.
5. See under the Marugātalai inscription.
It will thus mean the bed intended for sleep as also for long and deep meditation.

It was mentioned earlier that the cavern has two stone benches. Evidently these were intended for religious practices and the beds for sleep.

The text and translation of the inscription may be taken as follows:

Erukoṭṭūr Ila-Kuṭumpikān Pōlalaiyan
ceyta ay-cayana-nedu-citana(m)*

The bed intended for sleep and (also) for long (or deep) meditation made by Pōlalaiyan, a (husbandman) householder of Iḷam (Ceylon (and a resident) of Erukoṭṭūr.

The ending an in the name of the donor Pōlalaiyan is the Tamil vikus, indicating third person singular masculine nominative. The rendering of it by Narayana Rao as "the citizen of Polal (Polal-aryanam)" is neither convincing nor correct. The word Pōlasā occurs in the Uvasagadasā as the name of a town, and the abhidhanarajendra mentions Pōlasāgha as the name of a garden. It is well-known that the Buddha delivered his first sermon just after obtaining perfect enlightenment near the Deer Park at Varanasi. This incident is considered very important and finds narration not only in literature but also in sculpture profusely. In the Tibetan version of the incident, the place is referred to as Polani⁶ and in the Chinese version as Pololai.⁷ It is possible that the name gained sacredness on account of its connection with the Buddha. The Tamil word Polil which denotes a park has probably some connection with the words Polani or Polalai. If that be so, it may be presumed that the name of the person in this inscription is formed after the name of the Deer Park and the inscription itself has some connection with Buddhism.

The inscription mentions the donor as a householder (kuṭumbika) of Ceylon (Iḷam) and a resident of Erukkōṭṭūr. This village may possibly be identified with the modern Erukkōṭṭūr,

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7. Ibid., p. 489.
the native village of the Tamil poet Tayan—Kanmanar, whose poems are included in the collection of Sangam work Aham as already mentioned.

Three more labels of a similar nature have recently been discovered at the same place. They are said to have been exposed to view in the course of repairs carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India to the cavern. They appear to be incised on the rock-cut beds in the caves. Two of the three labels now copied are found in the cave where no inscription had been previously copied and they contain only a few letters.

A. The first of them contains only two letters in the Brahmi script:

na ya

B. The second contains only four letters:

ma ta ye va

These two records being very small, it is not possible to interpret them. Very likely they contain names of persons who were responsible for making the beds in the cavern.

C. The third label is found in the upper and in accessible cavern. The record reads as follows:

a na tu va na ko tu pi ta va na

This may be restored in Dravidian as anutuvan Kotupitavan.

Antuvan is a personal name commonly met with in classical Tamil literature. It is also used as such in combination with other words.

8. See p. 252.
8a. No. 140 of 1951-52.
Kotupitavan is evidently the modern Kotuppitavan with the p and t doubled. As pointed earlier, this doubling is not followed in these records. This word will mean who caused this to be given:

The entire label would mean "Antuvan (is the person who) caused this to be made." 13

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13. But it is to be noted that this form of construction is not met with in Tamil and is foreign to it. This appears more as the form peculiar to the north Indian language. It would have been better if the order is changed into Kotupitavan Antuvan meaning "the person who caused this to be given is Antuvan." This is probably due to the influence of the syntax in Sanskrit.
Siddharmalai (Sages Hill) is a hill near Meppūpaṭṭi, not far from the Pēranai Dam in the Nilakkottai Taluk of the Madurai District. The situation of the cavern on the top of the hill lying close to the bank of the River Vaigai which winds its course here to the Dam is most picturesque. There is a spacious cavern in the southern slope of the hill and measures no less than 197 feet in length and 8 feet 8 inches in height. There is a Siva temple on the top of the hill. A Tamil inscription dated omaniparam 1410 is found on the walls of the temple. The hill is called Siddharmalai in it. There is a chamber in it in which two rows of five stone beds, each with a pillow loft, have been cut. There are Brāhmī inscriptions at the head side of the beds. Therefore the inscription may be synchronous with the period of the beds themselves.

The cavern contains in addition a small shrine enclosed by modern railings for a pair of sandals raised on a platform. Over the brow of the cavern, just above the shrine containing the sandals is a Tamil inscription, which refers to them as the sandals of Sahajānandanātha, of about the 14th century, who was a pupil of the ascetic Sachidānandanātha and the author of the Manoramā, a commentary on the Anandalahari.

Krishna Sastrī has read the label as follows:

1. Po ti na [u] ra a ta [na].
4. Ti to v la a ta na.

1. 44 of 1908.
2. Subrahmanya Ayyar writes about them: “The beds in this cavern are five. Though they are not so well preserved as those preserved in other caverns, they are of great importance in that they contain Brāhmī inscriptions on the pillow portions of the beds themselves establishing beyond doubt the synchronism of the beds and the formation of the cave.”

3. 45 of 1908.
4. 47 of 1908; also Rep., part II, p. 91 para 99.
5. A na tai a ri ya.
8. Ca’na ta na tai ca na ta na.

He notes that in the seventh letter ta of the first label, the two lower prongs, of which the one of the proper right is generally straight and the left somewhat carved have been reversed, and that though in the eighth letter ya of the third label which is identical with the second label the right half of the letter has been omitted, and thus looks like the modern Nagari य (ya) without the top stroke, it may be read as ya in consonance with the letters ve ya in the second label. Similarly the seventh letter vi of the seventh label is not clear on the impression and the photograph.

He also draws attention to the fact that the combination of aßa occurs six times in these labels, twice in the labels at Alagarmalai and once in those of Kongarpujiyankulam, and that similarly anatai occurs seven times in the present labels. Venkayya has tried to explain anatai ariya (E) as "the dwelling place of the Buddhist Saints."

Subrahmanya Ayyar's emended reading and translation of the labels are as follows:

1. Potinūra—a—taßa:
   The gift of one belonging to Podinūr.

2. Kuviṟa antai Vey-a taßa:
   This is the bed of Kuviṟa and the gift of Vey.

3. Tiṭayil—a—taßa:
   The gift of one belonging to Tiṭai.

4. Antai Ariati:
   The bed of Ariati.

6. He has retained only one of the two identical labels (Nos. 2 and 3 of Krishna Sastrī's reading).
5. *Antai Irawatã̃n*:
   This is the bed of *Irawatã̃n*.

6. *Mâlira antai*:
   This is the bed of one belonging to *Mâdirai*.

7. *Visuvan Canasa anatâi*:
   This is the bed of *Visuvân Canatân*.

8. *Canatân anatâi*:
   This is the bed of *Canatân*.

9. *Vēnata—a tanâ*:
   This is the gift of *Vēnata*.

With regard to these inscriptions he says:

"In these inscriptions we note the use of the genitive suffix a after the names of the persons; that *tanâ* has the same sense as *dana* 'a gift' which often occurs in the Ceylon inscriptions and elsewhere and that final a is in some cases omitted. What has been taken as *anatâi* has been read here as *antai*, treating *na* as a basic consonant. We may take it that it is used in the sense of a bed. It is purely a Sinhalese word still used in the same sense and pronounced as *yenda*. What makes this interpretation likely is that these inscriptions are found on the beds themselves. *Antai*, or *antai* may also be treated as part of proper names as in *Eyiīn Antai*, *Pisir Antai*, *Añjil Antai* etc., who figure as *Agam* composers. Similarly also *tanâ* and *tan* may be treated as part of names, cf. *Kiratâtan*, *Vinättân*."

Narayana Rao questions the meaning 'a bed' assigned by Subrahmanya Ayyar to the word *antai*. He prefers the reading of Krishna Sastri except that of the second letter of the seventh label which he reads as *ti* with Subrahmanya Ayyar instead of as *dhi*.

His grouping and restoration of them are as follows:

1. *Polâna 'ūra' a tanâ*
   restored as

   *Polâna'ūra-sya danâni* in Sanskrit and translated as:
   'The gifts of the village *Polâna'ūra*.'
2 & 3. He treats the second and third labels as identical and reads them as:

*Kuvira' ana tai* of which the Sanskrit restoration is:

*Kuberaṇam dēyam* meaning 'the gift of the sect called the Kubera’s and vṛṣya’ a lana with its Sanskrit restoration.

*Vaidyasya danani* meaning 'the gifts of the merchant or cultivator.'

Narayana Rao thinks that from the fourth label the lines run one into another.

4 & 5. *titōila’ a lana.*

He thinks that *titōila* may stand for the Prakrit *titillā* meaning *dvarapala pratiḥāra* meaning a door-keeper, messenger, a *deśya* word (Gathasattasai 556) or *tilāha* from the Sanskrit *tṛṣṭha*, a congregation of Buddhist monks and nuns (*Vīśeṣavākyaka bhāṣya*, 1035) and that the a after *titōila* stands for the genitive singular termination-sya. Therefore, according to him the second meaning also suits here:

*ana’ana* stands for the Sanskrit word *dananam* and *tai* is to be restored as *deyam*.

Thus it will mean ‘the gifts made to the congregation of Buddhist monks and nuns.’

5 & 6. *Ariyati’ anatāi* which becomes in Sanskrit *arya-sriṇam dēyam* and means

the gift of the husband—women.

6 & 7. *Iravatana Matirīc’antai* of which the Sanskrit restoration would be *Iravatanaṃ matriṇam dēyam* meaning ‘the votive offering of the mothers of the Iravata sect.’

7 & 8. *Visuvana Canatana tai* of which the Sanskrit restoration would be *Visuvanam Janapadanaṃ dēyam* meaning ‘the votive gift of the people of all the villages.’ cf. nāṇa desīṃ, pekkandru etc., occurring in Telugu inscriptions.

9 & 8. *Canatana ana tai* with its restoration in Sanskrit as *Janapadanaṃ anyad dēyam* and meaning ‘another gift of the villagers.’
9. *Venatali tana* with its restoration in Sanskrit as *Vina-
taya danam* and meaning "the gifts of Vinata (or of a devotee).

The labels may be read and interpreted as follows:

1. The fourth letter of the first label which has been doubtfully read as \( \tilde{u} \) by Krishna Sastri is damaged. There is a horizontal stroke at the top indicating the medial \( a \) long, and therefore it is not possible to read it as the vowel \( u \). The letter looks like a badly shaped \( ra \) or \( ca \). It may even be taken as a badly shaped \( ra \) or \( ru \), considering the succeeding letter which has been read as \( ra \). We may thus take that the whole word gives the name of a place ending with \( ur \). There is also a faint trace of a base to the letter which has been read as \( ra \), thus making it look like \( na \). Then the last two letters can be read as \( vana \) or \( cana \). But this is very doubtful. We may for the present be satisfied with the reading \( ura \), by the officers of the Epigraphy Department who might have had the possibility of examining the record in situ. The first three letters making up \( potin \) evidently form the principal part of the name of the place which is suggestive of the potiyil hill (cf. Vikkiramangalam record).

The last two letters are \( Ata \) which is evidently the name \( Atan \), with the final \( u \) the masculine suffix missing.

The label would therefore read as:

\[ Po \ t\ i \ \tilde{u} \ ra \ a \ ta \ [\tilde{u}a] \]

with the restoration in Dravidi as

\[ Po \ t\ i \ \tilde{u} \ ra \ a \ ta \ [u] \]

and mean

Atan of Potin = \( ur \).

2 and 3:

The second and third labels appear the same with the exception of the eighth letter which is found to differ in them. The second label reads:

*Kuvira anatzi Veya Atana.*

The eight letter which has been read as \( ya \) is badly shaped. The third arm at the right is not of equal height with the others;
it is very short. In the third label this letter looks very much like the Dravidian \( \lambda a \), though this has been read by the officers of the Epigraphy Department tentatively as \( ya \). The first two arms are written just like the letter \( \lambda a \) with a small projection to the left at the top of the first vertical line. The third arm has been attached to the bottom of the second and is written downward at the right. Thus the entire letter can be read only as \( \lambda a \). (possibly the third arm of the eighth letter in the second label, instead of being written as a downward stroke has been written as an upward one).

The third label would read

\[ \text{Kuvira anatai vela atana} \]

and in the Dravidi form it has to be restored as:

\[ \text{Kuvira antai vēḷ Aṭan} \]

The interpretation of the word \textit{Antai} has been discussed earlier (see pp. 233-34). \textit{Kuvira} is the Tamil form probably through Prākṛt of Kubēra. This is found as \textit{Kubira} or \textit{Kubiraka} in the Bhāṭiprolu inscription.\(^4\)

This may be translated as: “His Holy Father (of the Ajivika religion) Kuvira and Āṭan (i.e. Āṭan).” \(^5\) (Is it possible that the word \textit{Vēḷ} means donor ?). If the eighth letter in the second label is really \( ya \) the word in which it occurs along with the next word would read \textit{Vēy Āṭan}, which could have been the name of a person.

4. The second letter of the fourth label has been read by Krishna Sastri as \( \jmath \) and by Subrahmanya Ayyar as \( ta \), the latter of whom takes the top horizontal line as a mere serif. If it is so the inscription has to be read as \( Ti \ j\ a \ i \ a \ a \ ta \ na \) restoring it in Dravidi as

\[ Ti=\text{tal}=\text{it Āṭan} \]

The first word being the adjective participle of the word \textit{Āṭan} probably represents the name of a place; and it is possible that

8. It is also likely that the entire label represents the name of a single person.
it is some thing like Tiṭiyil or Tiṭiyil. There is a village called Tiṭyian near Dindigul in the Madurai District. This village finds mention in an inscription from Śrīvilliputtur of the Bāna Chieftain Uṅgā-villi-dāsan who ruled from Śrīvilliputtur in the fifteenth century. Very likely that Tiṭyian was the place intended. The record would thus mean,

Āṭaṇ of Tiṭiyil.

5. The label reads Antai Ariya. In Drāviḍi it will be Antai Ariy. It is not known if it contained any other letter or letters. Some faint traces of writing are however seen in the record. The word Ariya may either be Ariy i.e. Hari with the superfluous suffix y or Āriya, i.e. Ārya, a term of respect. But the word Ārya in its Sanskrit form does not seem to have been used in those early times. Only the Pāṇḍīr form Āiyam or Āyyam was in use. So it is to be taken only as Ari. The label may be translated as "Holy Father Ari."

6. Traces of earlier writing are seen in this label also. Probably there was some previous writing on the stone which had to be obliterated to incise the present label, but that was not effaced completely. It is not also known whether the label is to be read in continuation of the previous one or treated as an independent one. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes it as a continuation of the previous one. As it stands the reading of the inscription is:

\[ Ti \text{ Anātai [i]ra] va la } \eta \]

In Drāviḍi it is to be read as Ti Antai iravatān.

There must have been one or two letters before ti. The reading of the fifth and sixth letters are only tentative, as traces of earlier writing are mixed with the existing ones and make the reading difficult. The suffix η indicates that the last word is the name of a person. Probably it stands for Airevataṇ i.e.

8. 577 of 1926; also S. I. I., 1, No. 138 and 139.
Indra, lord of the elephant, Airāvata. We know that the worship of Indra was more popular in the Tamil country in those days than it is at the present day. (cf. Silappadikāram which mentions the festival of Indra held every year at Kaverippumpattiram. According to the work there was also a temple for Airāvata at the place.9

Or can the word be Iravātān; meaning one who does not beg?

7. The reading of this label is:

Matira Antai Visuvan

The first word evidently stands for the place name Matura (Madurai) which, we know was referred to frequently as Matirai in early Tamil inscriptions (cf. Cola inscriptions of Parāntaka I with the title, Matirai—yum Ilamum koṇḍa).

The inscription means

‘Holy Father Visuvan of Madurai’

8. This label reads:

Ca na ta na tai Ca na ta na

In the Dravīḍi form it has to be read as:

Cantantai Cantan

Cantan is the name of one of the seven persons noted for their munificent gifts and who lived in the middle period (i.e.) the period immediately preceding the classicl or Sangam age known collectively as itai-y-eluvalal.

In the same way as the word Satlantai is formed of the two words Sattam and tantai the word Cantantai should be taken to have been formed of the words Cantan and tantai.

9. This label reads:

_A na tai ve na ta A ta na_

and in the Drāviḍi form it becomes

_Antai Venja Atan_

The word Venja \( [n] \) means a king and more especially Devendra (i.e.) Indra, king of the Celestials.

It will be seen from the above reading and interpretation that all these labels merely record the names of persons who were in all likelihood members of some religious order. It is probable that they were all members of the Ājivika sect.
This is a small hamlet about ten miles from Madurai on the Madurai-Tirumangalam Road. A range of hills known as the Ummanāmalai runs parallel to the road on the left side. The last of the hills near the hamlet has a cavern measuring forty-three feet east to west, twenty-six feet deep (on the eastern side) and about five feet high. It contains a large number of beds, not less than thirty. Krishna Sastri says that there are five Brāhmi inscriptions in the cavern, two of which are highly damaged and cannot be read. Subrahmanya Ayyar refers to them as ‘a Brāhmi inscription on a bed and others on a sheltering rock.’ He also says that another detached boulder in the same locality contains a bed and Brahmi inscriptions. In addition there are two Jaina images cut just above the brow of the cavern with no inscription below them.

The three legible Brāhmi inscriptions¹ have been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:

1. Vi na tai u ra.
2. Cai ya a la na.

He remarks that as in other cases the first inscription which ends in ura may be the name of a village.

Subrahmanya Ayyar who has changed the order of the first two reads them as under:

*Caiyalan Vinataiura Kaviy.*

He suggests that these three words may refer to the names of three persons who occupied the cave or that *Caiyalan Vinataiura* may be the name of the occupant, and *kavi*, *gavi* ‘a cave’ with the penultimate lengthened. He also thinks that it is likely that the word *kavi* is connected with the Sinhalese root *kap* ‘to cut’ and refers to the cutting of the cave, in which case it is to be translated as “This is the cave of *Caiyalan Vinataiuran.*

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1. 58, 59 and 60 of 1910.
Narayana Rao prefers the order of Krishna Sastri and reads the inscription as:

Vinatali'ura caiya' a lēna Kaviya.

Taking Caiya’a as the form of the Sanskrit word Caityaka, lēna as that of layana, a hollow and kaviya as of guhika, a small cave and equivalent to the Dravidian kavi he translates the record as follows:

“The small hollow cave-monastery of Vinatali’ura.”

There are three inscriptions (a, b and c) at the place. The first one (a) has not been read so far by any of the scholars who have studied the Brāhmi inscriptions in the Tamil country. It is very much damaged and only a few letters can be made out here and there. The letters that could be read are:

... ... Kai Ko ci va na ... ... Ka [v] ya

In the penultimate letter, only the bottom portion in the form of a rough triangle is discernible. The upper portion is damaged. Very likely it is vi, and the whole word may be made as Kaviya or Kavi with the addition of a superfluous y as suffix. Kociyana is to be restored in the Dravidi as Kociyan or Kosivan (Kausika). The other letters are all damaged.

Of the other two records those read by Krishna Sastri as the first two items form one, and the third another. The second record was taken by him as two separate items. But their order has been changed by Subrahmanya Ayyar; and the photograph of the impression supplied supports his order. However, it has to be pointed out that the letters in the first section in the photograph are bigger, while those in the second are smaller. It is not known whether these two sections constitute two separate records or a single one. As such the reading and interpretation of the last two ones have to be made on the presumption that the first record, damaged and not read as it is, is an independent one complete in itself, not having any continuity or connection with those now attempted.

The letters are clear and there is not much difficulty in reading them. Adopting the order of Krishna Sastri, the
entire record (second and third photographs) will be as follows:

\[ Vi \text{ na tāi} \ u \ \text{ra cai ya a \ la na Kā \ vi \ ya } \]

Following the principle adopted for reading the Drāviḍi script of the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription the present inscription may be read as:

\[ Vi \text{ na tāi(y)} = \text{ār caiyālāṇ kaviy} \]

The terminal \( y \) in the word kaviy is a superfluous one; but as noticed earlier it is found added in many of the Tamil inscriptions. The correct word is kavi. The context in which the word is used would show that this word should either form part of the proper name or refer to the object of the record. The word as part of a proper name can only mean a poet; but it is very doubtful whether at such an early period to which the inscription belongs this word was used in the meaning of a poet and we do not know of any such usage. The only other possibility is that it denotes an object. In similar contexts in the other inscriptions we find words like caṇṭam (bāyana = bed), aṭṭānanam (aḍhiṣṭhana), paṭi (pāṭi = bed, sleeping place) etc. Likewise the word kavi also should denote some such thing. We have the Sanskrit word gavi meaning a cave. In the Tiruvorriyūr inscription of Caturānana Paṇḍita dated in A.D. 968 the word gahva, is used to give the meaning ‘cave.’ The Tamil word for ‘cave’ is guhāi; but the connection between it and the Sanskrit word gahva is not clear. Kavi-lāl in Tamil means ‘to cover, overspread, bend over, over-shadow, overshade’ etc. A natural cavern with an overhanging rock would exactly be an appropriate place to satisfy the description. Obviously the word kavi has been used in this record to denote ‘a cavern’ with an overhanging boulder.

Caiyālāṇ is seemingly a proper name as is denoted by a masculine suffix \( aḥ \). In the region where the record has been found we find even to day the name Siyālāṇ or Ciyālāṇ borne by some men. The name is also occasionally found used in literature

3. Tamil Lexicon, S. V. Kavital.
and inscriptions. The *Silappadikaram*, for instance, mentions an *Eṭṭi Sayalan*, *Eṭṭi*, being a title conferred on a merchant. Some times the name is derived from *Śīyya* or *Śiya* the *Prākṛti* form of *Simha*. It is possible that the word is related to *Caiyalan* also.

The only other word in the inscription under consideration is Vintai(y)ūr and the suffix of ūr to the name denotes that the word represents the name of a place. Is it possible that the name of the place is Vinataiyūr or Vintaiyūr?

Then the whole record would have to be translated as:

The cavern of (made by or belonging to) *Caiyalan* of *Vintaiyūr*.

As mentioned earlier Subrahmanya Ayyar changes the order of the first two words and reads this record as:

*Caiyalan Vinataiyūra Kāviy* and translates it as:

"This is the cave of *Caiyalan Vinataiyūram*" taking the final ū in *Vinataiyūram* as dropped. The name of the person as taken by him would be

"*Caiyalan*, the native of *Vinataiyūr*."

The way of expressing the name of a person is very peculiar and not met with elsewhere in the Tamil country. It does not appear to be a Tamil form wherever the name of a place or family is found along with a personal name, the former is invariably prefixed to the latter. Even in the *Prākṛti* inscriptions found in Nasik in Western India only the Dravidian practice of prefixing the name of a place or family to that of a person is found used. As such if the above is the correct order of the record *Vinataiyūra* has to be interpreted in a different way.

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4. See The *Silappadikaram* Canto xv. 1. 163, also V. R. R. Dikshitar’s translation of the work, pp. 36, 216, 216n, and 217. See also *Manimēkalai*, canto. IV, 1.58.

It is possible that the expression Vintai-ūra is made up of two words. The word vintai is not found used in early Tamil literature. But a word Vintai-K-Karan is found in the Tamil Lexicon giving out the meaning ‘artist’ širpi (śilpi). But the word śilpi also denotes an architect and stone mason. Similarly another word Oravar is found used to denote the Śamanar. The Kāśakkuḍi plates of Nandivarman Pallavamalla give the word uḷaiyanaya-p-pallī as denoting a Jaina-pallī. Evidently the words vintai and āra of this record indicate the architect and Jaina respectively. Then the record as read by Subrahmanya Ayyar would mean: “The cavern for the Jaina caused to be modelled or made by the architect (or stone mason), Caiyarān.” The word Caiyarān then would itself seem to be related to the word caiyta.

6. From the photograph it appears that the letter ra has at its top the symbol for its medial vowel a long which shows that it is not a basic consonant, but with the inherent a short.

7. Tamil Lexicon, S. V. Vintai-k-karag. though it looks a late word.

8. S.I.L., II. No. 73, p. 353, 1. 129.
VARICCIYUR

Some three furlongs to the south of the village of Varicciyur situated a mile to the east of Vilattur, itself eight miles due east from Madurai is a hill consisting of three big rocks. The hill is said to belong to the village of Konattur. The eastern most of the three rocks is called the Udayagiri and contains a big cavern. It is formed by the projection of two sides of a huge rock, and is spacious enough to shelter a large number of persons under it. A number of beds are cut on the bottom of the cave. The over-hanging boulder about 30 feet from the cavern contains a damaged Brähmi inscription¹ on its brow just below the Katarah. The inscription has been copied in four bits A, B, C1 and C2.

Their readings are:

A. $\pi_1$ re ya ko tu pi.

The first letter read as $\pi_1$ when compared with the last letter should be considered as damaged. One letter after the last one $\pi_1$ is seen in the photograph; but it cannot be read as the right portion is not visible. Most probably it is ta.

The word $\pi_1\text{re}$ (taking ya as a pure consonant as required in the Drávidi) evidently has to be restored as $\pi_1\text{ray}$, the form in which the word $\pi_1\text{ra}$ is actually spoken even to-day, representing a dwelling place or a hermitage. The word $\pi_1\text{ra}$, derived from $\pi_1\text{ri}$ 'to separate' also means a separator or one that is separate. It is possible to take the word in that form itself, thus indicating a separate bed, probably intended for the teacher. The next word $\text{Ko}tupi$ has to be completed very likely as $\text{Ko}tupitza$, followed by the name of the donor. But that is not seen in the photograph.

B. This label is damaged. Only letters here and there are visible in it.

... ta ... ra ta [va] ... [ka] ... na ... ra ka la na [la]

¹ 38 of 1908,
As it is, it is not possible to make any sense out of it. 

C1 and C2.

Both these labels appear to contain two lines of writing. Evidently these two form a single label. They are highly damaged. Only individual letters are visible here and there. It is not possible to read even a few letters consecutively to make up even a single word.
Anaimalai which is about five miles from Madurai on the Melur Road is an important place of pilgrimage. It is evidently so called from the shape of the hill which is very much like a sleeping elephant with its trunk hanging down. The hill is prominently seen from several miles. It is also considered important by the Jainas as one of the eight hills sacred to them. At the foot of the hill are groups of Jaina figures with inscriptions below them, cut on a huge boulder, and also one or two abandoned Jaina shrines. Almost at the top of the elephant's trunk there is a natural cavern not very far from the summit, very difficult to be reached. It is so naturally formed that it affords shelter from rain and sun. The cavern is 23 feet 6 inches long and 3 feet high as its entrance in the centre. Above the entrance, there is a small cutting in the boulder, a drip line, to prevent rain water from trickling into the cave. In the interior there are three double beds and one single bed, the last being in a comparatively lower level. Four more beds are also found covered with earth. Outside the cavern, exposed to sun and rain are eight beds. All of them are chiselled smooth and provided with raised portions on one side meant to serve as pillows for persons lying on them. A little off from the cave is a fine perennial spring of water, one of the necessary accompaniments of all caverns.

A Brahmi inscription¹ is engraved above the entrance into the cave just below the drip line cutting. This is one of the best preserved of the cavern inscriptions.

Krishna Sastri has transcribed the inscription as follows:

1. I va [m] je na ḍu tu u ḍai
   yu la [pa] ha na ta na
   ṣ ri a ri ta na.

2. a ta tu va yi a ra ṇam tha
   ka yu pa na.

¹ 457 of 1906.
He also notes that the fifth and eighth letters, the forms of which have not been found elsewhere, have been read by him as \( qa \) and \( qai \) on the strength of the remarks made by Bühler on the palaeography of the letter \( qa \) in the Bhaṭṭipālī inscriptions, and adds that the readings are not certain and they may be conjunct consonants as well. The tenth letter read by him as \( pa \) occurs occasionally in the ancient inscriptions of Ceylon; but here it is rather broad. He says that the eleventh letter read by him as \( pa \) may possibly be read also as \( po \) and that the clear dot after the twenty-third letter \( ta \) (the second symbol in the second line) is probably to be taken as an \textit{anusvara}.

Regarding the interpretation of the record he suggests that \textit{Ivamje nādu} may be the name of a country and \textit{udaiyu} may correspond to the Tamil word \textit{Udaiyān} ‘a chief.’ \textit{Eri} in Tamil means a tank; \textit{Āritana} may stand for the Sanskrit \textit{Haritanam}. Finally he diffidently remarks that \textit{taluvyi} may stand for the Prākrit \textit{lamluvaya} ‘a weaver’.

Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the fifth and eighth letters as \( ra \) and \( rai \) respectively and the third letter as \( ku \). His reading of the inscription is as follows:

\textit{Iva Kunrattur urai yulnātin a tana}

\textit{Eri Aritan Alluvyi Araṭṭha Kayipan}

The occurrence of the \( r \) symbol immediately following that of \( n \) fixes the value of these symbols. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the word \textit{υυς} as plural and also thinks that the final \( r \) in the word \textit{Kunrattur} and the final \( m \) in the word \textit{tānam} in the first part of the record have been elided (omitted). He translates the record as “these are the gifts of \textit{Yulnātān} residing Kunrattur.” He treats the latter part as only giving the names of the persons who probably occupied the cave in the first instance and as such feels that it does not need any comment.

Narayana Rao accepts the reading of Krishna Sastrī with a few emendations and tries to interpret the record grouping the letters as follows:

Ivaku-nāṭṭu-ta Uṭṭuyula-Potana-tana
Eri Ārilana Alantuvarī a-raṭṭha-Kayipana.

He treats the fifth and the eighth letters as īṭu ignoring the additional signs added to these two and rejecting the value based on the hard consonant r peculiar to the Dravidian languages assigned by Subrahmanya Ayyar. Narayana Rao questions the reading of the third letter as ku by Subrahmanya Ayyar when it was read as jē by Krishna Sastrī; but later on accepts the same, with the reservation that it does not make much difference as it occurs in a proper name.

He says that the word nāḍu meaning a country "need not be considered a Dravidian word" and derives it from the Sanskrit root nāṭ 'ta wander,' tu in nāṭṭu standing for the Sanskrit tah 'from.' He also considers that Potana stands for pūrāṇam or paurāṇam, tana for danaṃ, Eri-Ārilana for Airavatana, raṭṭha for raṭṭra, and Kayipana for Kāśyapanam.

The meaning of the epigraph then is "the gift(s) of the sons (grandsons?) of Uṭṭuyula belonging to the Airāvata sub-sect of the Kāśyapas of the Atāntuvāyika-raṭṭra and (who had come) from Ivaku-nāḍu."

The actual reading of the record is as follows:

Ivakuṇṭrata uraiyula Potana tana Eri Arilana
Alantuvari Arittha Koyipana.

Adopting the principle followed in the reading of the Bhaṭṭiprōlū record mentioned earlier, the reading of this record would be:

Ivakuṇṭrata uraiyul Potanāra Eri Arilam
Alan tuvayi Ariththa Koyipan

Subrahmanya Ayyar takes ivakuṇṭrata as two words śva being the form of the Tamil neuter plural śvai meaning 'these
and Kupattra representing the name of the place of the donor with the final r dropped. It is true that there are now some villages bearing the name Kupattra. But this name does not seem to be found used in former times. There were places having the suffix kurnam etc. Similarly we may take Ivakurnam as the name of a place mentioned here with the case ending atu of the sixth or genitive case added. Then the correct form would be Ivakurattu. But here the letter t is not doubled and the final u is indicated as long instead of as short as required. Probably we have to take the form lu as indicating ltu. Similar instances where the consonants have not been doubled as required are found in other inscriptions also. It is also known that such doubling does not take place in the Prakrit and only single consonants are used instead of double ones especially in cases of hard letters like ka, ta, pa etc. Ivakurnam may probably mean "Elephant hill," made up of two words ivam from the Sanskrit ibha, meaning an elephant, and kurnam or kura a hill." It would then become a synonym for Anaimalai, the place where the inscription is found (Agai = elephant and malai = hill, mountain). Probably Ivakurnam was the earlier name of the place.

Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the next word urai as the adjectival participle, meaning 'resident of' to the proper name Yulnathan. The letter pa is quite clear and Krishna Sastri also has read it likewise, it cannot be read as na. Further the name Yulnathan does not make any sense. On the other hand, the expression uraiyul occurs in classical Tamil literature in the sense of residing.

Palaṇṭan is very likely the Tamil form of the Pali word Bhadanta, 'revered master,' which is commonly found used in the Buddhist religious texts while the monks (bhikhus) address the Buddha.

Eri Arilan seems to be the proper name of the person. Eri is the Tamil word for Agni. It also means the sun, Sūrya. Arilan in the same as Ārilan with the initial long vowel shortened.

3. See for instance a place with that name in the Chingleput District.
4. Anattu Uraiyyul levarum.
as in Prākt, which practice is frequently found employed in these inscriptions. Ārītta is from the word Ḫrīta, denoting a member of the Ḫrīta family. We have for instance Ātiyān Āritan-ār, the author of the Tamil grammatical treatises Purāpporwovenpamalai.

Thus the record would mean.

"Revered master (bhaddanta) Eri Āritan residing (at) Ivakunram (Elephant-hill)."

The second record contains the name Ārittha Koyipan. Reference has been made earlier to the sanctity attached to the name of Ārittha. Previous scholars have read this name as Āroṣṭha without the medial i added to the letter ra. This form is also found used in early Tamil literature, among the Buddhists in the south, especially in Ceylon. Among the Jainis also one of the Tīrthankaras is named Āriṣṭhanēmi. Koyipan is a variant form of Kāṣyapān.

The expression Ātaṇ tuvayi, preceding the above name, probably is made up of two words, Ātaṇ and Tūvaiy. The first one Ātaṇ which is found in many of these inscriptions is evidently the same as Ātaṇ used very largely as part of personal names in classical Tamil literature, with the initial long vowel shortened.

The Tamil words tuvai and tūvi mean bird’s feather, and the latter form also denotes peacock’s tail. Possibly the Tamil word tūvayi (tuvai or tūvaiyar) denotes a person with (a bunch of) peacock feathers in his hand. It is well known that the Digambara Jain monks carry a bunch of peacock feathers in their hands. Probably the Ājīvikas also observed a similar custom. Peacock feather bunch is used for the arts of sorcery and witch craft; and the Ājīvikas are said to be adapt at those arts.

This record would mean “Āritta Koyipan, the Ātaṇ having a bunch of peacock feathers.”

5. See for instance, Araṭṭan Seṣṭi in Silappadhikaram Canto xxx, L. 47-52. See also V.R.K. Dīkṣīṭar’s tr. of the work pp. 338 and 340.
Pugalur

Pugalur is a village in the Karur Taluk in the Tiruchirapalli District and a station on the Tiruchirapalli-Erode line of the Southern Railway. The low hillock called the Ārunāṭṭar hill about two miles from the village, near Vaṭayudhampaḷaiyam contains caverns with rock-cut beds on the pillow-lofts of which are engraved labels in Brāhma characters. On the summit of the hill there is a Subrahmaṇya temple, about three hundred years old. The place must have been one of considerable importance even in those early days. Its location within ten miles of Karur reminds one of similar settlements at Āṇaimalai, Alagarmalai and other places round Madurai in ancient times. Further at Ardhanarippalaiyam, another village about seven miles from the Ārunāṭṭar hill, are found five beds chiselled out of a rock on the side of a boulder lying in the midst of a field with a spring called Aivar-sūnaī (the spring of the five) close by.¹

Pugalur is mentioned as Pugaliyur in the fragmentary Tamil record² of the time of the Vijayanagar governor, Śāyanya Uḍaiyar in the Siva temple at Pugai-Pugalur, a hamlet close by.

The inscriptions on the Ārunāṭṭar hill are mostly damaged and give the names of the persons who probably occupied the beds or had them cut.³ The first of them, however, which is comparatively a long record of four lines is of special interest.⁴ It ends with the word ‘ārulīla’ after which there appear to be two letters which are not clear. As the rock is very much weather beaten, it is difficult to make out this record completely. But it is of interest to note that it mentions three persons who were in the grandfather, father, and son relationship namely Ko Ātān Cellirumpurai, Peruṅkaṭun kōn and Kaṭuṅkō lāṅkōṅ. This reminds one of the members of the early Cera dynasty who

1. The name of the spring is in conformity with the popular tradition that connects such beds and caverns with the famous five Pāṇḍava heroes. (Annual report on South Indian Epigraphy 19:7-28, pt. ii para 1).
bore the same names as may be seen from the padigams of the Pātiruttu. But in the present state of our knowledge, it may not be possible to identify the persons mentioned in the inscription. Further the lithic record contains the name of a Cēṅkāyapāṇa who was obviously a Jaina monk for whom the cave was cut.

The inscription which may be assigned to the end of the second century or the beginning of the third century A.D. reads as follows:

A ma ṇa ṇa na ya ra ru ra cē it ka [ya] pa na ya...
kō a la na ce la li ru ma po rai i ma [ka] na
Pe ru ni Ka tu ni kō na ma ka na...
Ka tu ni Kō [i] la ni Kō aka aruta..

According to the general principle followed in reading the Dravidī inscriptions this record may be read as follows:

...Amaṇṇiṇi yarrūr Cēṅkā(ya) pāṇ ya
Kō atan Cellirumposix makan...
Peruṅkaṭuṅkōn makan...
Kaṭuṅkō (i) laṅkō aka arulla...

and translated as "this is the (cave) of Cēṅkāyapāṇa, a Jaina monk of Yarrūr, which was cut or caused to be cut by Ḍhakaṭuṅkā, son of Peruṅkaṭuṅkōn, son of Cellirumposix."

II. The second label reads as follows:

[Ti] a ti t ta na m

This would show that the beginning of this record is damaged. The lost portion evidently contained the name of the person who donated and was responsible for making the atiṭṭhānam or seat, of which however only the last letter ti is traceable. Very likely it is nemi as in other inscriptions at the place.

III. The third label is very much damaged. The word atiṭṭhānam is found thrice in the label. Very likely it is a
composite record mentioning the *atithyanam* caused to be made by more than one person. The legible portion of the label may be read as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ya & \ldots \ldots \ i & a & na \ & ka \ & ts \\
v & a & \ldots \ldots \ na(\text{na}) \ & ta & a & ti & ta & \ldots \\
& & \ldots & ta & a & ti & ta & ts & na & ma \\
& & \ldots & ts & ts & ts & ts & na & ma
\end{align*}
\]

Most probably the right portion of the photograph contains portions of another record.

Only one name, and that in an imperfect form can be made out from the label is *Itaikanla*.

IV. The fourth inscription at the place is of considerable interest as it mentions Karu-ur and a *Pon-vaniian* (gold merchant) of that city called Netti who had the *atithyanam* (seat) made. The actual reading of the record is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ka & s & u & r & po & n & va & ni & ka & n \\
Ne & i & ti & a & ti & ts & ts & na & m
\end{align*}
\]

The two symbols read as *n* in the first line (sixth and tenth) are quite different from the penultimate symbol of the second line also read likewise. In the former, the form appears more like a circle, the end of the vertical curve joining the base, while in the latter it is left hanging without joining. Further the former forms have a dot in the middle in each, evidently to denote that they are pure consonants. The presence of these dots and the writing of the letter *ka*, both initially and in the middle without the addition of any symbol to indicate that it is not a pure consonant but has the inherent a short as in the Dravid would point that this record is not written in the Dravid type, but in the system found to have been followed in all the other records of a later date in the Tamil country. The marking of dots to the other basic or pure consonants, though seen, cannot be asserted.

The Epigraphy Department has read the first letter of the second line as *Ni* and taken the word *Nitti* as the name of the

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donor. But the first letter looks very much like Ne, and the word may be read as Netti.

The word *adhisthānam* (Sanskrit *adhisthāna*) has been met with previously in the Brāhmī inscription at Sittannavāgal. It was seen above how Subrahmanya Ayyar has explained the word as meaning a dwelling place or abode.

The label as read and explained by the officers of the Epigraphy Department does not contain any verb, finite or infinite or verbal particle. These are inscriptions without any verb. They are all made up of mere names.

It is further to be noted that the letter ta sometimes doubled is seen in the other labels also. (e.g. No. I and II etc.). Very likely the word Netti is also intended in such places. Then it should be some verbal particle qualifying the word *adhisthānam*. Most probably it is connected with the word Nētal, to make a vow and means donated in accordance with a vow taken.

Then the label may be translated as

"The *adhisthānam* donated as a vow by the dealer in gold at Karu-ur."

V. The fifth inscription reads:

\[Ka \ ća \ ća \ ka [kō] \ la \ E \ y [i] \ ma \ na \ v \ u^8\]

The fifth letter of the first line is not clear. It looks like a badly shaped ēai. It may also be read as tai. Evidently it is ko. Treating the letter ka before it as a pure consonant k the word becomes k-kol according to the rules of sandhi. There is a horizontal line to the right at the top of the middle arm of ya, the last letter in the same line. The letter should be either ya or yi, the upward stroke of which is damaged and not clear. Very likely it is the latter. At the bottom of this letter there is a vertical line with a dot to its left in the middle. It may be read as either l or ra. Probably it stands for the word Eyiñar or Eyini.

The first word has to be amended as korra meaning 'belonging to the king' or brave or courageous.

The word in the second line is to be read as hsa, meaning a hall.

VI. The sixth label reads:

...na na va na na ka [ka va]
...[ve] na ta ... a ti ta ta na ma

It may be restored in Dravidian as:

...na vanakkan
...[ve] na ta ... attanam

This record mentions the adhisthanam made or caused to be made by a certain person. Evidently the word vanakkan which means a coin-tester denotes the person's status or profession. It is worth noting in this connection that another label found at the same place mentions pon-vanikan, the gold merchant.

At the right side of this photograph are seen the letters of another label arranged in three rows.

They read:

P [o]
Ka na
Ma

This evidently forms the left or opening side of another label the right side of which has been broken and lost.

VII. The seventh label may be transcribed as follows

Na ta la ra u ra hi ta na tai ma [ka] na
Ki ra na ko ra ra na

In Dravidian the record may be read as

Nalalapa ur Piyanai makan
Kiran korram

9. 345 of 1928-29.
The latter part of the record would mean Kiran Korrana son of Pițantai. Evidently the word Pițantai is a compound made up of Pițan and tantai (just like Ānti). Then the record would mean the holy person Pițan (Bhātara).

It is not possible to take Kiran Korrana as Korrana son of Kiran as in such a case it should be Kiran Korrana. The word mahan preceding Kiran Korrana shows that Kiran was the name of a single unit, a person.

The first portion ending with ār evidently represents the name of a place, to which the donor belonged.

VIII. The eighth label\textsuperscript{11} reads as follows:

\[ \text{Na ka na ma ka na pe ru na ki ra ma} \]

The three letters of na (3rd, 6th and 12th) as also mā (9th letter) have to be read as basic or pure consonants.

The record will be

\[ \text{Nakan mahan Perunkiran} \]

i.e. Perunkiran, son of Nakan.

According to Tamil grammar, words do not begin with na as the initial letter. But this occurs in Prakṛt where dental sa is changed into sa. Thus it may be seen that this label unmistakably shows the influence of Prakṛt.

\[ \text{11. 347 of 1927-28.} \]

\[ \text{12. In the photograph of the inscription there appears to be some sign between the sixth and seventh letters, and it would be possible to take it as (\textquoteleft r\textquoteright\textquoteleft) i.e., i. Traces of a stroke to the right are seen at the bottom of the tenth letter, thus making it appear as Ku. Then the latter portion may be read as:} \]

\[ I \text{ [ru] as ka ra} \]

\[ \text{But the name does not make any sense.} \]
Kunrakkudi, more popularly known as Kunnakudi is a small village in the Tirupattur taluk of the Ramanathapuram district, and lies at a distance of about five miles from the Karaikkudi town. The place obviously derives its name from the hill (कुटु) which is in the middle of the village. At the top of the hill is a temple dedicated to God Subrahmanya. There are three rock-cut temples excavated at the foot of the hill for God Śiva who is facing south. One of them is used as a strong room for the preservation of the valuables of God Subrahmanya at the place. The second shrine is dedicated to God Macilleśvara as mentioned in a Vāṭṭeluttu record at the place, and the third to Malaikkolundisvara. The walls of the cave temples contain a number of Śaiva and Viṣṇuva sculptures, as also more than twenty inscriptions of the later Cōla and Pāṇḍya periods.

On the western side of the Subrahmanya temple on the rock is a natural cavern or rock-cut shelter. The area under the boulder has been converted into a building with several compartments and occupied by mendicant beggars, who call it Jñāniyārāmadām. In it are set up the figures of a Nāga, Hanuman, and a seated image, which they call Jñāniyār. The whole cavern space under the boulder bears close resemblance to similar ones found in some of the Tamil districts, particularly Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tiruchirapalli and must have contained a number of stone beds with pillows which appear to have been used by the Buddhist, Jain and Ajivika ascetics, who retired to such places for pious meditation and religious exercise far away from the noise and bustle of inhabited areas. Near the cavern in the boulder at Kunrakkuḍi is a rock-cut well which must have supplied water to the residents in the cavern.

A Brāhmi inscription is found engraved on the inner side of the brow of the rock overhanging the cavern. It was copied and noticed by Venkoba Rao in the Epigraphy Report,
Madras, for 1909. The inscription however does not appear to have been read and interpreted so far. Even the three scholars Krishna Sastri, Subrahmanya Ayyar and Narayana Rao, who have worked on the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country, have not taken it up for study, though they have studied those that were collected by the Epigraphy Department even after 1909. Apparently this is due to the peculiar manner in which the inscription has been incised on the overhanging brow.

This is a short record consisting of only eleven letters. It is written not only upside down but also in the reverse form. As one stands on the floor and sees the writing on the overhanging brow he finds that the top portion of the letters is at the bottom while their base is at the top. Further the letters are incised reverse as found in the matrix of a seal and the record has therefore to be read only with the help of a mirror.

All the letters in the inscription, except the third one which is damaged, are clear. The inscription reads:

\[ U \hat{p}i [\tilde{u}] \, r\tilde{a} \, a \, t\tilde{a} \, n\tilde{a} \, c\hat{a} \, t\hat{a} \, n\tilde{a} \]

Following the principle followed by Dr. Bühler while editing the inscriptions in the Brāhmī script recovered from Bhaṭṭiprōlu one has to treat as basic consonants the two \( n\tilde{a}'s \), the first of the two \( t\hat{a}'s \) and the \( r\tilde{a} \) in the Kuṇṭakkūḍi inscription and read it as

\[ U \hat{p}i [\tilde{u}] \, r\tilde{a} \, Aṭān \, Cattān \]

Upiūr is obviously the name of the place. The word Aṭān looks very similar to the word \( Aṭān \) one meets with in early classical literature. It has been suggested that the word Aṭān or Aṭan is derived from the Sanskrit word āpta which is a synonym for arhat, the Supreme Lord. The word arhat is found in use not only among the Jainas but also among the Buddhists and Ājivikas. From the Tamil poem Nilakēśi it is learnt that the word āpta was used by the Ājivikas to denote exclusively the founder of the religion (Makkhali gōśala) Markali. Even in a late Kannada inscription of the thirteenth century A.D. from

2. vv. 670, 671, 683 etc. (A. Chakravarti’s Edn.)
Śravana Belgoḷa the word *apta* is used; and it is obviously a reference to the holy men among the Ājīvikas. Therefore, the word *Atan* or *Ātan* is derived from the word *apta* and obviously means a holy person belonging to the Ājīvika faith. Cattan is probably the name of a person.

Thus the inscription would mean the holy person Cattan of Upiūr. Possibly he was the resident of the cavern.

The record as one sees it from the ground

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F F S I H Y T 9 Y Y T
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Reverse form

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E I Y Y 9 T Y S F E
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Correct form

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J Y Y P Y D Y H H T
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3. See A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 79, 125, 244 and 276.
Māmanḍūr in the North Arcot District is a village seven miles from Kaṅcipuram and lies to the west of the river Pālar. The place is already well-known for the rock inscription in Sanskrit of the Pallava King Mahēndravarmān I and for the series of four rock-cut temples excavated at the foot of the low range of hills about half a mile to the west of the village and assignable to his time. A natural cavern which lies about a furlong to the north of the caves half-way up the hillock, is formed by two boulders one reclining over the other, thus providing some shelter underneath. A thin and shallow drip-line is cut on the over-hanging rock to take off the rain water. This would indicate that the cavern should have originally been used as a human habitation.

Kaṅcipuram was a flourishing Buddhist centre in the early centuries of the Christian era, and it is possible that the cavern at Māmanḍūr could have served as a place of retreat for itinerant Buddhist monks as their winter resort. As said above, similar caverns with or without inscriptions, have also been discovered in the districts of Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Madurai and Coimbatore and some of them at least were probably Buddhist in origin. Further north, in the Tiruchirappalli and South Arcot districts also early vestiges of this faith have been found. The one in Mālakoṇḍa in the Nellore District has been noticed above. The present cavern at Māmanḍūr is therefore of interest as furnishing another evidence of the existence of early religious retreats, which appear to have been formed in many districts of South India in the early centuries of the Christian era.

On the brow of this boulder is found engraved an inscription in four short lines in early Brāhmi characters.

The inscription appears to be couched in the early Tamil language and states that the cavern was the gift made by some chief (kōṅ) whose name, however, is not clear and who is stated to have given Toḻūr. The mason’s name is given as Calāvan.

1. 531 of 1937-38.
2. 171 of 1939-40; Report for 1939-40 to 1942-43pt. ii, para 1.
The inscription reads:

\[ \text{ka na ma fo} \]
\[ \text{to ru ra ta na ka ko na ku na } [\text{ra.....ma ci}] \]
\[ \text{ce yi ta na ta ca na ca la} \]
\[ \text{va na} \]

The second line contains the expression \text{Tora-lanta koh.} The word \text{tanta} has been used in classical literature in the sense of having 'captured' and 'given away as to among equals.' A \text{Pandy}a king whose poems are found both in the \text{Puram} and \text{Atham} of the \text{Sangam} classics is named \text{Ollaiyur tanta Pala-Pa}ndiyam. It is possible that the word \text{tanta} means 'having captured and then given away' in the same way as the word \text{valangiyu} is used in the inscriptions of \text{Maravarman Sundara Pandy}a I.

The person who actually had the cavern modelled is called \text{tacan Calavan}. The word \text{tacan} should be used with the \text{c} doubled. But only a single \text{ca} is found here.

The name \text{Calavan} would be equal to \text{Calator} i.e. an ignoble person as opposed to \text{Ca}ndor. It has the same meaning as the words \text{Avinila} or \text{Durinila}, later on borne by the Western Ganga kings. Such names appear to have been borne only by the Jainas. Evidently the architect here was a Jaina.

\text{Tora} means a herd of cattle.

The first letter of the first line read as \text{ka} has a tail at the bottom, turned towards the left. Similar forms occur in the \text{Bha}tuprolu records, where it has been read as \text{sa}. But that value does not suit here. Further the letter \text{sa} has not been found anywhere else in these inscriptions.

The inscription may be read in \text{Dravid}i as \text{Kanmato Tora\-tanta koh kun (ra ma ci) ce yi tan taccan Calavan} and translated as

"This was gifted by the chief \text{kun [ra maci] who gave kanmato Tora. Mason Calavan did it.}"
Aracalur is a village in the Erode Taluk of the Coimbatore District and lies in the Erode-Kangayam road. It is about twelve miles from the Erode town. There is a low lying hill called the Nagamalai, near the village which contains a natural cavern at a height of about sixty feet from the surrounding area. It is locally called Andipparai. In this are found three beds with inscriptions. They were reported in the newspapers as having been found by some interested scholars among whom were Sri M. Raju, Seeri Venkataswami and Sri Pal. I visited the cavern with my colleagues in 1962 and took impressions and photographs of the inscriptions.

Of the three inscriptions one is highly damaged and only a few letters here and there are visible in it. The second consists of five lines each having five letters. It appears to contain vowelled consonants of the letter t, like ta, ta, ti, tu, tai, etc. Both the inscriptions seem to be later in date when compared with the third one in Brahmi characters in two lines.

This find at Aracalur in the Kongu country lying about thirty miles to the west of Pugalur is perhaps at the western limit of the area from which such labels have been recovered so far.

The present label inscription like many others in the Tamil country is in the Tamil language as may be seen from the use in three places of the Dravidian na which is like an inverted J. But compared with other similar labels it presents some new forms of letters.

The opening symbol i.e. the first letter of the first line is a circle with a dot inside. This indicates tha in the Brahmi script. This is not found anywhere else and it cannot also be the initial letter of the record. It may therefore be taken to represent a word like mangala or siddham. Even though the word siddham is represented by symbols at the beginning of inscriptions yet they are not uniform. There are many forms, though all of
them have been uniformly read as siddham. Some of them are in the form of a spiral like @, which is probably a later development or evolution of the present from a circle with dot inside.

The second letter is a ta with a curious super script in the shape of a box at its top. But the box has apparently no connection with similar boxes found at the top of each letter in the variety of the script known as the 'box-headed' commonly used in the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, as these two are separated by intervals of time and distance. It cannot also be taken as a ligature or dvandvākṣaya, as it does not make any sense, and as such forms are not found anywhere else in the Tamil area. The box slightly appears to be incomplete. Very likely it represents the symbol for the medial vowel i long. It may be noted in this connection that the symbol for medial i short is largely found in the other Brāhmī labels, while the symbol for the long one is not found anywhere. Thus the letter has to be read as ii.

The second and third letters in the second line are shaped like the (English) Roman letter Z. These are preceded by the letter va and succeeded by two symbols for the letter ka (double ka) followed by the symbol for the Dravidian nā which is the suffix for the third person masculine singular nominative, thus indicating the name or epithet of a person. Of the two successive forms of this letter as well as of the succeeding ka, the first one should represent the pure vowel, and the succeeding one the vowelled consonant with the inherent a. The only letter in Brāhmī closely approximating the symbol is nā, two horizontal bars with a straight vertical line, connecting the two in the middle I. Only the vertical line is here slanting almost connecting the right end of the top horizontal line with the right end of the lower line. This form is evidently an evolution of the original form obviously necessitated for writing the letter in a simple stroke without lifting the hand or stylus. Then the word can be read as Vaṁakkam.

Almost the same form is found in the seventh letter of the first line, and here also the same value has to be applied to it. The letter immediately preceding it is a pa with the right arm fully drawn downward and a booklike stroke opening downwards
added to its right. Thus it becomes $\eta u$. This letter also is not found in the other labels.

Of the three succeeding letters in the first line, the first one is $m\alpha$. The cross bar is not fully drawn so as to connect both the arms; but it stops in the middle, while it is projected to the right so as to make it appear as the symbol of the medial vowel $\alpha$ long. It may be noted that traces of a similar projection is also seen in the fifth letter, where it has to be read only as $m\alpha$, with the inherent $\alpha$ short. But here the projection is pronounced and it has been read tentatively as $m\alpha$ with the medial vowel $\alpha$ long.

The next letter is peculiar. The two horizontal strokes at the top to the left of the vertical line indicate that they represent the medial vowel $\alpha \iota$. But the main letter is unusual. It does not resemble any Brâhmî form. The only nearest approach to it is the form of the Dravidian $\eta a$, found in similar labels, with the lower limb of the form not clear. The stone appears to be damaged here, peeling off portions of the lower part.

The last letter of the first line is a tripartite $\eta a$. It is interesting to note that all the three horizontal lines in the letter have each a serif or $talaikka\tau\mu$ in the form of a small circle. In fact this $talaikka\tau\mu$ is found in some other letters also e.g., $m\alpha$ and $\eta a$ (ninth letter in the first line) as also on the penultimate letter and the one previous to it in the second line. But it is pronounced here.

It remains for us to consider the last seven letters of the second line. The first letter $te$ and the last letter $\eta a$ are clear. The middle five present difficulties. In the second letter the lower part is damaged. It can be either $\eta a$ or $ca$. It does not resemble the first letter of the second line which has been read as $v\eta$. The third letter can be read as $m\alpha$ (long). But the addition of the symbol vowel $\alpha$ long is found in the middle of the stem and not at the right of the overhanging hook as in other inscriptions. The only letter to which medial vowel $\alpha$ long is added as found herein is $\eta a$. But the projection of the base to the left does not make it a $t\alpha$ unless we take it as a natural defect in the stone which it does not appear to be. This letter can be read
as ti. But there appears to be a small circle or taliakkattu at the top of the vertical line, thus making it a part of the letter and not of the medial vowel added. Such a form in Brahmi will be qa or da; and this letter has not been met with anywhere in similar labels. Probably it may be ca. The next letter resembles ra or ta. There is a resemblance of the line being doubled, though we are not sure. The lower part is damaged. The sixth letter appears to be a badly formed ta. After the second beginning of the line there is a small dot. It is not, however, clear whether it indicates the пули or virama.

The reading of the label may now be as follows:

Siddhama [*] Ti ta ta ma pu ha ta ta ta na m [a] [r] ai ya Va na na ha ka na te va na ca ti ta n.

The label may be restored as follows: Siddham (by symbol). Tittam пуна талиан Maraiya Vannakkan Tevan Caitan.

Palaeographically comparing this label inscription with the other ones so far recovered it may be assigned to a period later than the Pugalur label and thus dated to the third or fourth century of the Christian era.¹

1. The inscription has been noticed in the Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy for 1961-62 p. 10 also. The tentative reading given in it is as follows:—

1. Elitnso Pепнaг(у)ден Mалайя
2. Vannakkan (Teva)n (Chatta)n

The Brahmi characters employed here are apparently more advanced than those in which the cave inscriptions at Pugalur (Karur Taluk) and Elagippayam at Sittappavasal (Kulattur Taluk), both in the Tiruchirappalli District, the Arinkamedu (near Pondicherry) graffiti etc., are written. The present epigraph must therefore be assigned to a date later than that to which the other epigraphs are attributed. Some of the letters of this inscription are not worthy for their special forms. For instance the very first letters has been rarely met with in early Brahmi epigraph (A. R. Ep., 1906, No. 457) from Agimalai, Madurai District, a letter very similar in form to that of our epigraph is met with. Among the early Brahmi epigraphs from the north it is only in the Kalsi edict of Ashoka that a somewhat similar sign is employed for this initial vowel, (Indian Palaeographical Chart, by G. Boehler, Table No. II, Line 7, column No. III). The medial U
Let us now proceed to understand what the label purports to tell:—

The word *tilam* may be restored as *tirtham* which is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit work *tirtha*, supplying the pure consonant *r*. Such elision of *r* is very common in Tamil inscriptions, e.g., the word *Durgai* (SK. *Durgā*) is generally found written in inscriptions as (*Tukkai*) Duggai without the pure consonant *r*. The word *tirtham* means ceremonial purity, 'Holiness' and indicates also the Jaina *agamas*.

The word *puṇa* means to 'put on', 'to wear' to undertake, etc. Then the expression *ti* (*r*) *tiram* *puṇa* may be translated as "(in order) to undertake austerities to attain purity or holiness."

The next word is *taḷan*. This is the verb which indicates the act of giving away or bestowing. The word should be *taḷan*

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sign seen in the letter *ṭ* is also peculiar as also the medial sign taken to represent the vowel *ai* in the letter *lai*. The form of the letter *ka* with its horizontal line showing a tendency to curve downwards indicates its development from its simpler earlier forms. The other interesting letters met with here for the first time are *ṣa* and *cha*. As for the language, the presence of the letter representing the sound *jā* and the manner of doubling the consonants by repeating the same letter twice as for instance in vappakkañ (line 2) point to the fact that it is Tamil. Further, from its tentative reading given above it may be observed that the language of the record is not mixed with Prakṛt words as in the case of the other early Brāhmi epigraphs from southern India. This inscription is therefore very important as it may be said to be the EARLIEST TAMIL EPGRAPH known so far. Though, owing to the archaic nature of the language employed in it, the meaning of the inscription cannot be satisfactorily made out, yet it may be construed that a person whose name is probably Tavan Chittan put the letters together (*ṭuṭu* [p] *uṇar* [u] *maṇ*).
and not tattar as found in the inscription. According to the rules of sandhi in Tamil grammar the initial τα in the word tantar should be doubled when it follows the word Påṇa punattanum. Then this may be read as punat-tantar with the intervening η dropped. But this does not seem to be the intended version as in that case the important letter η is dropped out and as such doublings of consonants necessitated by the rules of sandhi are very often ignored. The word tantar is derived from root τα. According to the Tolkappiyam, the three words τα, τα, koḍu all mean the same thing: 'to give away'; but each of the three words should be used according to the status of the giver and the receiver. The use of the word τα indicates the receiver in lower status, the word τα that both the receiver and the giver are of equal status while the word koḍu shows that the receiver occupies a higher status.

I ta koḍu enak kilakkum mūrum iravin kilavi agu idan udaiya avarrul.

'τα en kilavi ittun kurre

'τα' en kilavi oppōn kurre

'koḍu' en kilavi uyartton kurre'

This is best illustrated by the epithet pannaḍu tantar Pāṇḍiyar given to the king who had the classical anthology of the Nappina indicating that the Pāṇḍya conquered the country or territory known by the name of Pannaḍu and gave it back to the king from whom he captured it, in which transaction both the parties were of the same status, both being kings. But in the case of the present inscription it could not have been that the giver and the receiver were of equal standing. The receiver should have been an ascetic of some religious order and the gift was intended for his undertaking some religious austerities. Thus he was a person who was to be respected and venerated by the ordinary people. As such the use of the word tattar may not be appropriate for the occasion. It may also be noted here that in

1. a Tolkappiyam Sol : Eesaviyal, 48-51.
similar labels found elsewhere only words derived from the word *kogu* like *kudupitta* (*kudupita*) are used. Perhaps the form *tattan* found here is connected with the Sanskrit word *datta* with the suffix *ana* added.

The next word is *maraiya*. This is evidently the adjective of the next word *Vaṅnakkan*, appearing in the next line. Names like *Vādama Vaṅnakkan Dāmōjara, Vādama Vaṅnakkan Perumcattan* are found borne by poets whose verses are included in the anthologies known as the Sangam classics, where the word *vādama* meaning ‘northerner’ indicated the place of their origin. Similarly the term *Maraiya* should here indicate the place of origin or residence of the donor. It would mean one belonging to *Mārai* which occurs as the name of a territorial divisions in the Tamil literature of the medieval period. Probably that is the shortened form of *Māranadu* mentioned in the *Tāncaivānan Kōvai*.

The next word is *Vaṅnakkan*. It means a ‘tester of coins’.

The last word contains seven letters, not all of which are easy to decipher. They may be conjecturally taken as *Te va na ca ta ta na* and read as *Tēvan cattan*.

2. If the first letter is taken as *ma*, the word will be *maraiya* and this can be interpreted in two ways: (a) To take the last letter as a pure consonant, a superfluous one found sometimes at the end of words ending with the medial *ai* i.e., *maraiy*. This practice was found in the early medieval period i.e., eighth to tenth centuries. It is very doubtful if it was prevailing at such an early period as the date of the label inscription under study. Then it will become an object meaning a hiding place or secret place. It is not known if the caverns were known by that name. Then it involves syntactical difficulties. It is very unusual to find the object mentioned after the verb. If it is to be normal it should be *tambaramai*. Even then the mention of the donor after that is not correct. (b) The other way is to take the word *maraiya* as an adjective to *Vaṅnakkan*. If it is connected with *marai* meaning the *Vajjas*, thus, indicating a Brahmana, then the correct form would be *maraiyom* as a nominative and not as an adjective. Either way the reading cannot be interpreted.

Evidently the word is connected with the Sanskrit *varnaka* which may also be construed as one connected with the colours. The word Vannakammar indicates a painter of colour.
The label may be translated as follows:

"Success (this bed) was given for (the purpose of) undertaking austerities to attain holiness or purity by Tēvan cattan, a tester of coins and a native of Māpanāḍu."

The person or persons to whom this gift was made has not been stated in this record.¹ The last four letters may perhaps be tried to be read as tīraṇa. But there is one difficulty in such reading. The word tīrtha would bring immediately to one's mind the tīrthākaras of the Jainas, and as the word also indicates the Jaina agamas it will be tempting to take this as a gift to the Jaina ascetics. But there are difficulties in such an interpretation. The Jainas do not appear to have used the word tīrtha in the sense in which it has been used in this label. The tenor of the language would suggest that the austerities so undertaken would lead to the position of the attainment of the tīrtha or tīrthākara. The Jainas hold the number of Tīrthākara as twenty four and no addition can be made to it. Thus this is quite against their belief.

The symbol used for siddham at the beginning of the label is also to be considered. In the Tantric and astrological works, this symbol of a circle with a dot inside represents the sun. This symbol is used all the world over. In astrological works the sun is the principal planet around whom the other planets may be said to move. The Ājivikas were experts in astrology and other modes of prognostication foretelling the future. In fact their sacred books are said to consist of ubhayamārgam and aṣṭamaḥanimittam. The latter consists of the books on the science of prognostication. There are also many references in literature to their practising the

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¹ The word Tīrthākara is used among the Vaishnavas of South India and indicates a holy person. References are made to them in the hymns of the Āyāras.
art of astrology which moves round the sun. As such it may be considered that the gift was intended for the recluses of the Ājīvīka sect.⁵

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5. This paper was originally published in the Silver Jubilee Volume of the Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India. It has now been published in a slightly revised form in the light of further study of the inscription.
Some Inscriptions of the Early Centuries of the Christian Era

The epigraphical records of the Tamil country after the period of the Brahmī labels discussed above become available only from the commencement of the seventh century A.D. The intervening period may be treated as a comparatively 'dark period' in the epigraphical field as in many other aspects in the history of the Tamil country. There are only a few streaks of light flashed by some stray records which can be definitely attributed to this period and found in this part of the country.

Three varieties of script are found used in the inscriptions recovered in the Tamil country and assignable to the period commencing from the seventh century A.D. They are (i) the Grantha script employed for writing the Sanskrit portion and the Sanskrit letters occurring in the Tamil portion of the records, (ii) the Tamil script, also referred to as Grantha.—Tamil used for writing the Tamil records in the northern part of the country by the Pallavas and their successor—the Cōḷas and (iii) the Vaṭṭeluttu script used for writing in the southern part of the country, viz., the Pāṇḍya territory and the adjacent areas till their final conquest and annexation to the Cōḷa empire in the eleventh century A.D. It is to be noted in this connection that in writing words of Tamil origin occurring in the Sanskrit portions of the records only the Grantha or the Grantha—Tamil is used, while the Vaṭṭeluttu script is employed in Writing the Tamil portion in such inscriptions.

All these three varieties of scripts are derived from the Brāhmī. The particulars as to when and how these varieties separated from the parental Brāhmī and evolved as independent scripts are not known. But if a surmise is possible the evolution may be traced with the help of the few inscriptions of the intervening period. They are the Tirunāthar kuṇṟu epitaph and the labels on the rock at Tirnchirapalli. Fortunately the labels at the latter place are found recorded in all the three varieties.
The earliest of these is a short record of four lines containing in all twenty-nine characters. It is found engraved on a rock at Tirunāṭhar-kunru near Tirunaruṅkoṇrai in the Jinji Taluk, South Arcot District. It reads

\[ \text{ai m pa t te l = a n = a} \]
\[ \text{ca na n no r ra} \]
\[ \text{ca n ti ra na n ti a} \]
\[ \text{ci ri ka r ni ci ti kai} \]

Aimpattel = anāṣaṇan noṛra Candira—
Nandi uśirikar niśidikai.

The niśidikai of Candra-Nandi Ācārya who (died), having observed the fast (not taking food) for fifty-seven days. Another inscription assignable to a period earlier than the seventh century A.D. has also been recorded at the same place. So far it has not been possible to state definitely whether this record is to be treated as written in the Tamil or Vaṭṭeluttu script. Gopinatha Rao included this under both the varieties. Very likely the two scripts had not become separate ones then. But some letters in the record clearly exhibit Vaṭṭeluttu forms. The letter \(\text{ai}\) is of the trident variety, already noticed in the Brāhmī labels at Alagarmalai. It occurs only in the Vaṭṭeluttu while the form of this vowel in the Tamil script was derived from the Brāhmī form of a triangle, with a horizontal stroke to the left at the top ( \(\text{T}\) ). The form of \(\text{na}\) of this record is the same in the Vaṭṭeluttu and is also found in the Brāhmī labels from Pugalīyur, while the form in the Tamil script is different. The letter \(\text{ma}\) has a flourish at the right in which the end of the line forming the loop is extended, just as in the Vaṭṭeluttu form which peculiarity is not found in the Tamil script. The symbol for the medial vowel \(\text{e}\) in the letter \(\text{te}\) and for the medial \(\text{o}\) in the letter \(\text{no}\) are also of the type found in the Vaṭṭeluttu and in the Tamil script. This record should therefore be considered the earliest in the Vaṭṭeluttu variety.

2. See ante, pp. 237-38.
The date of the record presents another knotty problem. The earliest datable records in this variety of the script are the Madras Museum plates and the Vejjikkudi plates on copper and the Tirupparanikkurram inscription on stone of the time of the Pandya king Parantaka Neelunjadaiyan in the latter half of the eighth century A.D. Considering the Vitthuttu form of the letters in these records as well as the changes found in the evolution of the Grantha script and the form of the Brahmi script of the inscription examined above, the Tirunatharkunru inscription may be taken as belonging to the fourth century A.D.\(^4\)

In the cavern in the rock at Tiruchirapalli, described above, a few of the stone pillars of the beds show traces of obliterated writing which have been assigned palaeographically to the fifth century A.D. One of these is said to contain the letter cira. Evidently the name Cirappalli or Tiruccirappalli owes its origin to this label.\(^5\)

On the ledge of the rock leading to the cavern there is a label of four characters deeply cut and repeated at least in four places.\(^4\) This has been read as Kamttu, evidently meant for Kamttugulu and interpreted as a Sanskritised Telugu word meaning ‘enemy,’ suggesting ‘that like many other similar titles of Mahendra varman, this may also have been his biruda’. But the reading Kamttu does not seem to be acceptable (sustainable), both palaeographically and etymologically. If the script in which the

---

5. “At Trichinopoly which was visited during the year, some interesting discoveries were made. Its ancient name as found in the hymn of Janasambandha in the Devaram is Chirappalli and the same occurs also in the long verse inscription of about the 11th century A.D., engraved in the Pallava cave on the hill. This name was in vogue for several centuries in inscriptions as well as in literature, until the time of the Vijayanagar rulers, in a few of whose records, however, the incorrect form ‘Tiruchchirappalli’ was sometimes used and this has given rise to the modern anglicised name ‘Trichinopoly’. Though the word palla has several meanings it appears to have in this case of special reference to its association with the Jaina and Buddhist religion, ancient vestiges of which have been found here.” (ARE., 1937-8, pt. II, para 3, p. 78).
6. It also appears to have been incised in a fifth place, where only the two last letters are now visible.
label has been incised is taken as Grantha then the reading should be either Ka$\text{\c{a}}$m$\text{\c{a}}$tu or Ka$m\text{\c{a}}$m$\text{\c{a}}$tu according to the place assigned to the anusvāra. In the early records of South India as also in those of North India, the anusvāra is written over or on the top of the previous letter. Thus in the Uruvapalli plates of Pallava Yuvamahārajā Viṣṇugopa the word jilam⁶ is written with the anusvāra dot on the letter ta. But this has been subsequently changed to the top of the succeeding letter, evidently treating it as the pure consonant m, thus making it appear more as a ligature. Not realising this some mistakes have been committed by earlier epigraphists, e.g. the name Mangiyuvārajā, viz., Mangiyuvārajā of the Eastern Calukya dynasty has been read as Maginduvārajā and the name of the place in the Pulimūrta plates of the Viṣṇukūḍin Mādhavavarman has been read as Pulibumra.⁷ It is the latter practice that appears to have been followed in writing the labels at Tiruchirapalli. This will become clear from the label Amithanandi discussed later. It may also be mentioned here, that to avoid this confusion in the later grants of the Pallavas the anusvāra is found written not on the top of the letters, but as a small circle independently in the proper place, next to the previous letter.⁸

The formation of the first letter ka and of the symbols of the medial u attached to the letter ṭu and the contention that the label has been written in the Grantha script. In the Grantha of the period the vertical stroke of ka is doubled either completely or at least in the lower portion. But it is only a single stroke and not a doubled one. Similarly the symbol for the medial u usually found in the Grantha script of the period is a vertical stroke at the bottom of the character, also doubled in most cases. But here the mark to denote the medial vowel is in the shape of a crescent. The fourth and last character which has been read as hu and taken to represent the visarga (h) is not seen written in this form anywhere. The hook-like curve on the left at the beginning of this letter is not found for the letter ha in any other

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10. Vide in the Ka$\text{\c{a}}$kku$\text{\c{a}}$ plates of Nandivarman Pallavamalla II (South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. II, Plate XI).
record of the period.\textsuperscript{11} We do not also know of any other instance where the *visarga* has been written as *hu*. The dot on the second letter has been taken as an *anusvāra*. In Sanskrit as also in Telugu, the hard consonant occurring after an *anusvāra* is not doubled. Again when consonants are doubled it is usual to have both the aspirated and unaspirated ones and not of the same variety as found here. Under the circumstance it is difficult to treat the record as having been written in the Grantha script.

The label is to be taken as written in the Tamil script, and in the Tamil language, and read as *Kaṭṭuṇa* taking the dot on the second letter as indicating the pure consonant according to the rules of the Tamil grammar *Tolkappiyam* referred to earlier.\textsuperscript{12}

The word is made up of *Kaṭṭu* + *un* + a negative, and may be interpreted as 'one who is not bound; or who has transgressed the bond (of attachment)'. cf. *Kaṭṭundaṅ* 'one who has been bound'; *Kaṭṭunṇi* 'one who suffers himself to be bound.' Thus the term *Kaṭṭuṇa* is something like *vilaraṅga* and indicates one who is free from the bonds of worldly attachment.\textsuperscript{13}

As mentioned earlier, this label is found engraved in four different places, along the precipitous approach to the cavern. In three places, a different label in early script is also engraved faintly below the word, while the fourth has a similar label inscribed above the word. One such\textsuperscript{14} is *Kaṭṭuvaḷku*. It is to be noted that as in the previous label here also the letters *ya* and *ka* (second and fifth characters) have dots on them to denote that they are pure consonants. The addition of a superfluous *y* after *ka* is a peculiarity met with sometimes in the Tamil inscriptions

\textsuperscript{11} Especially Nos 137, 138 and 140 of 1938.

\textsuperscript{12} See ante., p. 121.

\textsuperscript{13} The word *Kaṭṭu* also means control or regulation and thus may be taken as indicating 'one who is not bound by regulations.' We know that Pallava Mahēndravarman took pride in assuming such titles. If so it is possible that *Kaṭṭuṇa* is one of his titles in pure Tamil. We know some of his titles like *Cīrākārapuli* (tiger among artists), *Kātramud* etc., though sounding like Tamil are really mixed with Sanskrit and Telugu. The term *Kaṭṭuṇa* would appear to be the first title of Mahēndravarman in pure Tamil.

\textsuperscript{14} No. 138 of 1937-38.
of the period. The word kaiyvilakku means hand lamp or karadipam which at once brings to our mind the word Dipankara found in the Buddhist literature as the name of one of the Bodhisattvas. Dipankara is considered as the patron deity of sea-farers and it is said that in times of distress, and when they are lost in the sea, Dipankara will appear to them with light and guide them to safety. Thus the label may be taken as meaning the torch or beacon leading a person to eternal bliss. Evidently it denoted the name of a teacher.

The above two are the Tamil labels inscribed on the rock in the Tamil script.

Another⁰⁶ of the labels inscribed below the word Kattunā is written in the Grantha script and has been read as gatadosa. The photograph of the impression shows above the last character a little to the right a dot which may be taken as indicating the final m. Thus the label would read gatadośam in Prākṛt and evidently stands for gatadośam in Sanskrit, which should properly be gatadośah. The final m in the word is most probably due to the influence of the Tamil language, and is not the visarga(h) required for a Sanskrit work. The term, would mean one whose fault or sin has gone i.e. a pure soul. The word doṣa also means night or darkness; and as such it is possible to take the term as indicating 'one who has dispelled darkness and though brought light.'

The third label⁰⁷ also in the Grantha script has been read as Āmilananda. The third letter which has been read as ta does not have the loop and looks more like tha. Thus the label has to be read as Āmithananda. Evidently this also is in prākṛt and stands for the Sanskrit form Āmithyananda made up of the two words amithya and ananda with the long letter a shortened as a.

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16. The early Kadamba king Kaḍṇavarman II is known to have the title Doṣarṣaṭi. In his Kirukuppsṭur grant (line 7) he is called Doṣarṣi-ragṇakītāḥ (R.S. Panchamukhi, Digest of the Annual Report on Kannada Research in Bombay Presidency for the year 1940-41, p.4; in his Bemmur plates he is called Doṣarṣiivarma, (Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. V. Intrn., p. III and BI 245).

The word *mitha* is the Pārāśkṛt form of the Sanskrit *mithya*, meaning falsehood, illusion. The term would then mean the Bliss of Disillusion or the Bliss that is not false. Very likely this also was the name of some person.

The fourth label,\(^{18}\) consisting of three letters, written above the term *Kattuvā* is also in the Grantha script and has been read as *prayulai*. The middle one is very peculiar and the last one may be read as *le*. As at present, the reading of this label cannot be explained. Above it are seen portions of a diagram having some squares intended for playing some sedantic game like the chess.

In one place on the rock leading to the cavern is inscribed a label\(^{19}\) in Grantha script which has been read as *Tamcara[ka]*. Krishnamacharlu writes about it as follows:\(^{20}\)

"The word *Tamchahara[ka]* can be interpreted as a title of Mahēndravarman and to mean 'he who captured Taṅcha (Tanjore).' From the Vėḻurpālaiyam plates we know that Simhaviṣṇu, the father of Mahēndravarman, claimed to have conquered the Chōlas; and in support of this fact it may be pointed out that Kājñātī in the Tanjore District bore the surname Simhaviṣṇuchatur—vedimangalam in the Chōla times (No. 265 of 1907), testifying to its connection with the king of this name. As Pallava influence began to be felt in the Chōla country only from this period, it is possible that Mahēndravarman who may have participated in this southern expedition in the company of his father had adopted this title."

This appears to be reading too much from the label. The last letter which has been read tentatively as *ka* has a loop or circle at the bottom and as such it is definitely not possible to read it as *ka*. It looks more like *ta* or *tha*. At the beginning before the letter *ta* there are traces of another letter which may be read either as *ta* or *tha*. The letter which has been read as *ca* looks more like *dha* and the *anusvāra* is indicated by a dot above. After the letter *ha*, two dots, one above the other, are

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seen placed, thus indicating the visarga \( \grave{\text{h}} \). If these dots are ignored, then the space between \( \text{ha} \) and the following one, which has been read as \( \text{ra} \) will be disproportionate to what we find for the others. Thus the whole label will read:

\[
\text{bha or ta ta m dha ha h} \grave{\text{h}} \text{ ra ta}
\]

\[
\text{bhatam} \text{\( \grave{\text{h}} \)} \text{\( \text{h} \text{\( \grave{\text{h}} \)} \text{\( \text{r} \)\( \text{a} \)} \text{\( \text{r} \)\( \text{a} \)}\)}
\]

Is it possible to take the label as Bhadanta Har(i) ta i.e. the venerable Harata or Harita?\(^{21}\) And it is also doubtful whether the method of replacing the nasals with the anusvāra was in use at that early period and in this part of the country. As such it would be better to refrain from any attempt to interpret this label at this stage and leave it as it is.

In another place, we have a label\(^{22}\) Written in the Vaṭṭeluttu script reading Cenantaṇṭan. The same label is found engraved again close by. Of these two labels, one is written in a single line while the other is written in two lines. Faint traces of a dot on the second letter \( \text{na} \) can be seen in the photograph of the impression. If that forms part of the inscription, then the label would be Cenantaṇṭan (Senaṭanḍan or Sentanḍan). The suffix of third person singular masculine form indicates that the label represents the name or title of a male person.\(^{23}\) The labels

\[\text{Cenantaṇṭan}\]

\[\text{Senaṭanḍan or Sentanḍan}\]

---

21. Even supposing that the label reads Tamcahiraka i.e. the capturer of Taṇjavūr, then it would indicate only Simhaviṣṣu who is really credited with the victory and not his son Mahāndravarman who is not associated with the victory in any place.


23. The term Cenantaṇṭan is made up of two words, cēṇa-tanṭan. The first word cēṇa is evidently the Sanskrit word Sena and the second danda. Both mean army. Sena will become either Cēṇa or Cēṇai in Tamil. On the other hand we know that Cēṇai was used as a title of some Jains; c.f. (Sambhandar, Tiruvālangai padikam). Appar who was the head of the monastery of Pājaliipuram before his reconversion to Saivism was known then as Dharmasana. If the word in this label is intended as a title like that, it will come only as a suffix, and not as a prefix as is found in the label. The other word danda means a staff as well as obeisance. Sanyasis used to carry staff. The Vaigasevas were known as tridadīnas and Smitras chandanīnes. The word Markarin also indicates one who carries a staff, dandī. Probably the word is equal to dandin or Markarin.
evidently contain the names of the religious ascetics who were probably living there professing a religion different from the Vedic, either the Buddhist or Jain or the Ājīvika religion.

Palaeographically these inscriptions may be assigned to the seventh century A.D. The rock-cut temple for Śiva excavated in the rock and the long inscriptions in Sanskrit incised there clearly show that Mahēndravarman took a special interest in the place and in the excavation of the Śiva temple there. If so it is doubtful if teachers of other religions inimical to Saivism would have found it possible to have their abode in the same rock and very near the temple. They should have been there earlier, and these labels also should have been incised earlier. They may be assigned to the sixth century A.D.

We have referred to earlier the traces of obliterated writing on some of the pillows in the cavern. One of them which is fairly well-preserved reads namostu.84 The Grantha characters in which this label is written appear old and the script has been assigned to the fifth century A.D.

Thus we have the following records after the time of the Brāhmi inscriptions discussed above before we come to the inscriptions in the Tamil country which became available from the beginning of the seventh century A.D.

**Grantha script:** One label of the fifth century A.D and four labels of the sixth century A.D. all at Tiruchirappalli.

**Tamil script:** Two labels, of which one is repeated in four other places, all at Tiruchirappalli and assigned to the sixth century A.D.

**Vatteḻuttu:** One epitaph of the fourth century A.D. at Tirunāṭharkunru and the other (seventh century) at Tiruchirapalli written twice.
THE BRAHMl INSCRIPTION AT MĂLAKOŃDA

The Malakonda hill in the Kandukur Taluk of the Nellore District contains an early inscription in the Brahmī characters attributable to the third century B.C. The record is engraved on the brow of a projecting boulder of rock on the hill. The overhanging rock forms a large natural cavern below it. It is now called the Parvali-guha. It must have been occupied by Jaina or Buddhist monks. Though Jaina and Buddhist vestiges of a later date have been found in the Chingleput, North Arcot and South Arcot Districts, the discovery of this cavern with an inscription of the third century B.C. is of considerable value for the student of the early history of Jainism and Buddhism in the area. It has been seen that similar caverns have been found in the Tiruchirapalli, Madurai and Tirunelveli Districts.

The inscription which is somewhat damaged appears to be in the Prakṛt language and registers the gift made by a certain Siri Viri-Seṭhi, son of Nanda-Seṭhi of the Aruvā [lā] kula. The gift was apparently the cavern over which it is engraved. The Seṭhi donor mentioned above probably provided the cavern with the drip-ledge and slightly smoothened out the rough walls of the cavern and provided other amenities, so as to make it fit for occupation.

The epithet, [Aruva (ha or lā)] - Kulasa i.e. who belonged to the Aruvā [lā] kula applied to the donor is of interest. Probably it is connected with the Aruvā-naḍu or Aruvā-vaḍatalai (the northern section of Aruvā) applied to the tract of land


It has been suggested that the Aruvāḷar are called the Aruvahila kula, that this cave was made for the Sramaṇas and that the Aruvāḷar were Sramaṇas in ancient times (Mayilai Seeni Venkatasami, gamaṇamum Tamiḻum (First Part), p. 39. Though it is probable that the cave was intended for the Sramaṇas, it may not be possible to say that the Aruvāḷars were all Sramaṇas.
around Kānci and to the north of it up to Nellore and which is supposed to correspond to the country inhabited in the second century A.D., according to the Greek geographer Ptolemy, by the tribe named by him as Aruvarnoi. Evidently this formed the origin for the term 'Aruvar' applied to the Tamils by the Telugu people.

Text:

A ru va [la or ha] ku la sa Na m da
Se thi pu ta sa Si ri Vi ri
Se thi [na or no] da na.

The inscription may be translated as:

Gift by Siri Viri Sethi, son of Nanda Sethi of the Aruvāla (ha) Kula.
APPENDIX III

INSCRIBED POTsherDS FROM ALAGARAI AND URAIYUR

Besides the caverns which contain a number of inscriptions in the Brāhmī script in South India mentioned in the foregoing pages, there have been found a number of potsherds with such inscriptions in the course of archaeological excavations conducted at a few places in the Tamil country. The first among such sites is Arikamedu near Pondicherry where the excavations conducted by Mortimer Wheeler in 1944 yielded as many as eighteen potsherds with Brāhmī inscriptions. They have been already deciphered and published.¹ The excavations conducted by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology of the University of Madras recently at Alagarai (1984) and at Uraiyyur (1985 and 1986) have yielded a number of potsherds with inscriptions in the Drāvīḍi Brāhmī script. Two potsherds were found at Alagarai and five with clearly inscriptions at Uraiyyur.

As in the case of the Brāhmī inscriptions found in the caverns, the language of these potsherd inscriptions is also Tamil. From the levels from which they have been got, the other finds unearthed along with them and the palaeography of these inscriptions, they may probably be assigned to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century A.D. The inscriptions are written on a pottery which is usually called the black-and-red ware and assigned to a period roughly from the first century B.C. to the fourth or fifth century A.D. as gleaned from the excavations at these sites. They are found at comparatively low levels in the trenches suggesting that they belong to a fairly early period. Besides, the letters found in some of the inscriptions such as a, ka, ma, ta and pu closely resemble the letters of the Arikamedu potsherd inscriptions and therefore these inscriptions may be assigned roughly to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century A.D. as the Arikamedu ones.

The two potsherd inscriptions from Alagarai read as follows:

The first one contains three letters namely kā ta ta. The potsherd is a broken piece and the last letter ta in it is at the very end of the piece. Therefore it is an incomplete inscription and

by supplying the word n the inscription may be read as kūttan, which in Tamil means dancer. The second inscription which is well carved contains only one letter and reads ka.

The most important of the potsherd inscriptions got in the course of the excavations at Uraiyyur is written below the rim portion of a big pot which is unfortunately broken and contains thirteen letters on the whole. The length of each letter is about \( \frac{1}{4} \) of an inch and the first ten letters of the inscription can be easily read as mū lā na pē du a na la na na. It is then followed by three more letters, the reading of which is little difficult. The first among them looks very much like ṛa or ṛ the second ma and the third ṇai. Thus it may read as ṛamaṇai or ṛuṇaṇai. Obviously it refers to one Antanan of Mālanapū. But the real interpretation of the whole inscription is difficult on account of the broken nature of the sherd in which the last letter itself is not seen fully.

Another inscription which is engraved on a second potsherd contains four letters clearly incised which may be read as:

\[ pū ṇa ka ṇa. \]

The last three letters ṇa ka and ṇa are obviously a suffix to a name. Since during the early centuries of the Christian era the Nagas were one of the important tribal people who lived in the area and the names of some of the Sangam poets end with the suffix nakaṇ, the word nakaṇ may be taken as a suffix to a name. Pū stands for the name of the person or it is the last letter in his name.

The next potsherd contains eight letters including the first letter which is broken. The other seven letters are ka la a ṇa a ra ṛ. One interesting thing about this inscription is that of the seven letters the first, second, fourth and the sixth are vowelless consonants namely k, l, n, r followed respectively by the vowels a, a, a and ṛ. If each of the vowels is added to the previous vowelless consonant we get the word katanāṭi. Though the inscription is fairly clear, it is difficult to interpret it because of its incomplete nature.

The next potsherd contains three letters a raṭ ca, the old form of arasa or araiya meaning chief, lord, king etc.\

The last inscription reads ka li ṇe. It is incomplete and therefore difficult to interpret.

2. *Aroṣa* is the same as *Araiya* meaning a chief, lord, king etc., found in a number of early inscriptions of South India; *See S.I.F. XII Nos. 15, 16 and 60.*
## APPENDIX IV

### LIST OF TAMIL BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of find Place</th>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Inscription Number as in Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy or Indian Epigraphy</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ajagarmalai</td>
<td>Melur</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>70 to 79 of 1910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Araccalur</td>
<td>Erode</td>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>280 of 1961-62</td>
<td>Impression and photograph of the inscription were taken by the author himself in 1962.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ariṭṭaṭṭaṭṭi (Māṅguḷam)</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>460, 461 to 465 of 1906</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ānaimalai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>457 of 1906</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Karuṅgaḷakkiḍi</td>
<td>Melur</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>561 of 1911</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Kılavaḷavu</td>
<td>Melur</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>135 of 1903</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Kuṇnakkuḍi</td>
<td>Tiruppattur</td>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>44 of 1909</td>
<td>Incised upside down and in the reverse form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Marugāḷalai</td>
<td>Tirunveli</td>
<td>Tirunveli</td>
<td>407 of 1906</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Muttuṭṭoṭṭi</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>58, 59, 60 of 1910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Pugaliṭṭūr</td>
<td>Karur</td>
<td>Tiruchirapalli</td>
<td>341 to 347 and 349 of 1927-28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Place Name</td>
<td>District 1</td>
<td>District 2</td>
<td>Date/Period</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Siddharmalai</td>
<td>Nilakkottai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>45 of 1908</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Meṭṭupathi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sittanavasal</td>
<td>Tirumayam</td>
<td>Tiruchirapalli</td>
<td>388 A of 1914</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tiruppulankuram</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>333 of 1908; 140 to 142 of 1951-52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Varicciyar</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>38 A to C of 1908</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Vikkiramangalam</td>
<td>Tirumangalam</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>621 to 623 of 1928</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Find Places of Pot- Sherds with Tamil-Brahmi Inscriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>District 1</th>
<th>District 2</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Alagarai</td>
<td>Musiri</td>
<td>Tiruchirapalli</td>
<td>This site was excavated in 1964 by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Arikamedu</td>
<td>Pondicherry State</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>Ancient India; No. 2, pp. 109-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Uraiyur</td>
<td>Tiruchirapalli</td>
<td>Tiruchirapalli</td>
<td>Three seasons of excavations were conducted at this place in 1965, 1966 &amp; 1967 by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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