

Comments on Proposal L2/12-039, “Proposal to add two letters to the Grantha repertoire”

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In his proposal, L2/12-039, Michael Everson wants to add Tamil letters NNNA and LLLA to the Grantha character set and encode them as Grantha NNNA and Grantha LLLA.

Epigraphists’ view of NNNA and LLLA in Grantha

Before addressing each letter’s inclusion into Grantha, I would like to address the issue of whether Grantha script ever included the letters NNNA and LLLA. Over several centuries both Grantha and Tamil scripts have been used macaronically in inscriptions. Sometimes this has resulted in Tamil NNNA or LLLA being used in words in which other characters are from the Grantha script. Notwithstanding these occurrences, there has been no epigraphist who has called LLLA and NNNA as Grantha characters. Not surprisingly, books describing Grantha alphabet do not include LLLA and NNNA as Grantha letters. As a result, we can say that there is no evidence that Grantha character set ever included NNNA and LLLA.

On the inclusion of NNNA in the Grantha script

Going by the order of letters presented in L2/12-039, let us look at NNNA first. The example given in the proposal as justifying the addition of NNNA to Grantha is a false evidence, which is obvious to anyone with a basic knowledge of the use of Tamil and Grantha scripts by the Tamils.



Exhibit 1. Example used by Everson in proposal L2/12-039

The example given is grammatically and orthographically Tamil. This is an example of the macaronic usage of Tamil called Maṇipravāḷam, where Sanskrit words and Tamil words are mixed freely. In this case, *taṇi* – is Tamil and *ślokaṃ* is a Tamilized Sanskrit word with the Tamil ending *-m*. As is typical of such Maṇipravāḷam usage, we find **both** Grantha and Tamil characters in this text string. The last character is the Tamil letter ட (ma) with a dot (*pulli*) to make it a pure consonant ட̣ (*m*). The letter *main* Tamil script looks very different from *ma* in Grantha script. So when Everson claims that the string *-த ஸ்ரீ ஸ்ரீ ஸ்ரீ ராமம்* is in Grantha script implying all the characters are in Grantha script, it is not true. So, any claim that NNNA is used in the Grantha script is not proven.

That Grantha has had no NNNA can be shown by the following example.

Exhibit 2 shows lines 98-103 from plate 7 of Veḷvikuṭi Plates in English transcription, Epigraphia Indica, vol. 17, p. 302. I am using the word ‘transcription’ instead of ‘transliteration’ deliberately since the letter Ś stands for Grantha Ś as well as Tamil Cin in the inscription.

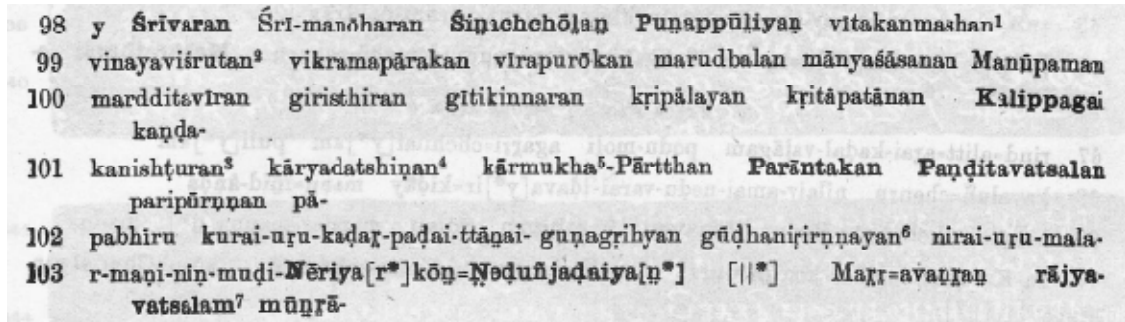


Exhibit 2. Lines 98-103 of Veḷvikuṭi plates in English transcription, Epigraphia Indica, vol. 17, p. 302

It should be noted that the last letter of the first name Śrīvaran is a dental *n* and the last letter of the third name Śinacchōlan (Cinaccōlan in transliteration) is an alveolar *ṇ*. The first name is written in Grantha¹ and the third name is written in Tamil Vaṭṭeluttu script. The corresponding lines in the estampage are shown in Exhibit 3.

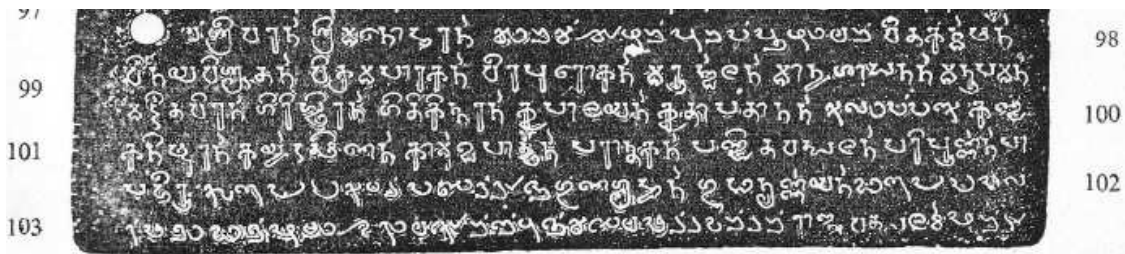


Exhibit 3. Lines 98-103 of Veḷvikuṭi Plates, (Source: Ten Pandya Copper Plates)

It can be seen that the plates clearly distinguish between the dental *n* and the alveolar *ṇ*. The significance of this will be seen in Exhibit 4 where Grantha characters are transliterated into Devanagari characters. Tamil Vaṭṭeluttu characters are transliterated using modern Tamil characters.

¹There is a difference of opinion regarding the last letter as discussed in the following pages.

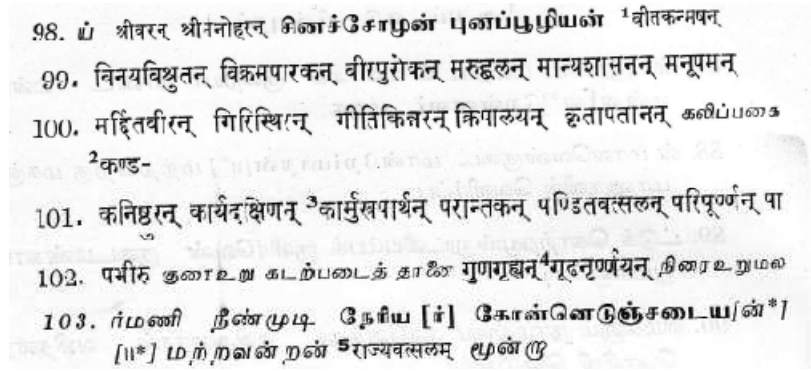


Exhibit 4. Excerpt from Vēlvikkuṭi Plates text with Grantha transliterated into Devanagari from Ten Pandya Copper Plates, p. 28

Exhibit 4 shows that the dental *n* in the name Śrīvaran is taken to be Grantha *n* and the alveolar *ṇ* in Ciṇaccōḷaṇ is taken to be Vaṭṭeḷuttu *ṇ* by the authors of Ten Pandya Copper plates. These lines shown in Exhibit 4 have many more names like Śrīvaran, the laudatory names of the king, which end in dental *n* and are of Sanskrit origin.

However, not all scholars agree that the last *n* in each of these names is Grantha *n*. Exhibit 5 presents lines 98-103 with the Grantha letters in English transliteration and the Tamil text in Tamil script as presented by Dr. Michael Lockwood, the author of “The Creation of the Pallava Grantha Tamil Script.”²

98 *ś* śrīvaraṅ śrīmanōharaṅ ciṇaccōḷaṇ puṇappūṇṇiyāṅ vītakarmmaṣaṅ
 99 vinayaviśrutaṅ vikramapāraṅ virapurōkaṅ marudbalaṅ mānyaśāśanaṅ manūpamaṅ
 100 mardditaviraṅ giristhiraṅ gitikinnaraṅ kṛpālayaṅ kṛtāpatānaṅ kaṇṭa-
 101 kaniṣṭhuraṅ kāryadakṣiṇaṅ kārmukhapārithaṅ parāntakaṅ paṇḍitavatsalaṅ paripūrṇaṅ pā-
 102 pabhīru குரைஉறு கடற்படைத் தாளை குṇagr̥hyaṅ guḍhanṛṇṇayaṅ நிரைஉறுமல-
 103 ர்மணி நீண்முடி. நேரிய[ர்*] கோன்னெடுஞ்சடைய[ன்*] [||*] மற்றவன்றன் rājyavatsalam மூன்றா[வது] . . .

Exhibit 5. Lines 98-103 of Vēlvikkuṭi Plates with Grantha letters transliterated into English.

One will notice that the last letter of those Sanskrit-derived words is written as Tamil dental *n*. The reasons for Lockwood considering this letter as Tamil *n* are explained by him as shown in Exhibit 6.

²This paper, "The Creation of the Pallava Grantha Tamil Script", by Michael Lockwood, is based on a paper of the same name, which he presented on May 9th, 2004, at Harvard University, and on its enlarged version, Lockwood (2008: 77-110). It should be noted that in his paper Lockwood uses ‘Grantha Sanskrit’ and ‘Grantha Tamil’ to refer to Grantha and Tamil scripts as discussed in the present document.

Similarly, there is also a mixture of scripts and orthographic systems in the Vēļvikuḍi Grant. On the 7th plate of the grant, side 1, there is a long list of *birudas* (titles). A majority of these are Sanskrit terms, written in the Grantha *Sanskrit* script. However, nearly all of these Sanskrit terms (22 of them) end in the Grantha *Tamil* letter ‘*n*’ (𑌎). I may be challenged by the rebuttal that this final ‘*n*’ looks exactly like the Grantha *Sanskrit* ‘*n*’. Well, it does, but this letter has two things which tie it to the Grantha *Tamil* script. One thing is the grammatical context and the other is a distinctive Tamil orthographic device.

First, consider the initial ‘Sanskrit’ *biruda* (in line 98), ‘*Śrīvaran*’. This title in proper Sanskrit and written in the Grantha *Sanskrit* script would transliterate as ‘*Śrībharah*’. The grammatical context, in this case, is the fact that this *biruda* and the other 21 all end in ‘*n*’, the common mark of the Tamil masculine gender, nominative case, instead of ending in the *visarga* (*h*), the Sanskrit nominative counterpart. (It is true that if the *birudas*/titles were “pure” Tamil words, the ‘*n*’ ending would be 𑌎 [*n*], but as these *birudas* are borrowed from Sanskrit, the convention is to substitute 𑌎 [*n*] for 𑌎 [*n*]. **Please note** that in my transcription of these 22 *birudas*, I have made **bold** their final 𑌎-s in order to emphasize that these bolded letters represent letters written in the Pallava Grantha *Tamil* script. Everything else in the Tamil language (in the Vēļvikuḍi Grant) is written in the *Vaṭṭeļuttu* script.)

Second, all the final ‘*n*’s of these twenty two Sanskrit *birudas* are graced with a Tamil mark called a *puļļi*. A *puļļi* usually appears in the form of a simple dot or tiny circle above the letter it governs. However, the *puļļi* sometimes takes the form of a short, wavy downward stroke. This is the form which the *puļļi* takes, here, above the final ‘*n*’ of every one of these twenty two titles in the Vēļvikuḍi plate.

Thus, I conclude that though most of the Tamil (language) passages in the Vēļvikuḍi Grant are written in the *Vaṭṭeļuttu* script, the letter ‘*n*’ discussed in the previous paragraphs deserves to be recognized as belonging to the *Grantha* Tamil script.

It is interesting to note that throughout all of the Tamil passages in the Paļļaṅkōvil plates, the *puļļi* has the form of a short downward stroke. Both of these grants (Paļļaṅkōvil and Vēļvikuḍi) have words or groups of words written in one script inserted into passages written in another script – or they even have single words, parts of which are written in two different scripts. Since the Pallava Grantha *Tamil* script has, from the beginning, borrowed the forms of most of its consonants directly from the forms of those same consonants in the contemporaneous Pallava Grantha *Sanskrit* script, this similarity in consonantal forms can result in a confusion involving the *anusvara* and the *puļļi*. The dot which signifies the *anusvara* (a nasal letter) in Sanskrit and the dot which signifies the *puļļi* in Tamil have very different meanings. Scribes of these documents which have such bi-scriptal (*Grantha* Sanskrit and *Grantha* Tamil) passages have, therefore, given the *puļļi* the form of a short, wavy downward stroke in order to distinguish it from the *anusvara* dot.

Exhibit 6. Discussion by Michael Lockwood on why dental *n* in the names on lines 98-103 should be deemed Tamil *n*

At the time of issue of the Vēļvikuḍi plates, Tamil script was already in use along with *Vaṭṭeļuttu* script. Here when *Vaṭṭeļuttu* 𑌎, Tamil 𑌎, Tamil *n*, and Grantha *n* were all available for the inscriber, it is clear that, because he was using the Grantha script in the rest of the word, he made it a point to use dental *n* instead of the alveolar 𑌎 even if the target he was trying to transcribe was alveolar 𑌎. This indicates that NNNA had no place in the Grantha script. (The only question with respect to the letter used in ‘*Śrīvaran*’ is whether it was Tamil *n* or Grantha *n* since the letters were similar in shape.)

The difference in opinion among scholars with respect to the letter used in Vēļvikuḍi plates points to the problem of similar-looking letters in Grantha and Tamil scripts. Now on top of already existing problems such as these, Everson wants to add Tamil NNNA to the Grantha set which will make it far worse for data entry and later use of the digital corpus of Tamil inscriptions with profuse mixture of Tamil and Grantha scripts.

So I request UTC to reject the inclusion of NNNA in the Grantha set.

On the inclusion of LLLA in the Grantha script

As for adding ೞ (Tamil ೞ, Unicode LLLA) to the Grantha set, I strongly object to such inclusion also. The reasons are as follows.

LLLA not native to Sanskrit

First of all, the letter LLLA is not native to Sanskrit. Please see L2/11-326 explaining its occurrence in Vedic texts in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

LLLA not considered to be a Grantha Letter by Epigraphists

Epigraphists have never considered LLLA as a Grantha letter. I include below some epigraphists' discussion of the occurrence of Tamil LLLA in the midst of Grantha characters in Sanskrit and Tamil texts and in the midst of box-headed characters in a Sanskrit text. The geographic locations of these inscriptions range from Tamil Nadu to Andhra Pradesh.

First I give an excerpt from the paper, "Convertibility of Surds and Sonants," by K. G. Krishnan in Indo-Iranian Journal, vol. 14, No. 3-4 (1972), pp.239-246. It should be noted that this was a reference Dr. Naga Ganesan offered as evidence in support of his proposal to include 'Dravidian' letters such as LLLA and NNNA to Grantha script. (See L2/11-034.)

In discussing the rendering of Tamil language texts in Grantha script, Krishnan says, "We now turn to sources containing Tamil texts, passages or phrases in Grantha script which was basically designed to write Sanskrit texts only. Sanskrit inscriptions in the Tamil country give the details related to the grant, which require the Tamil names of donors, donees and the location of the land granted, to be transliterated...It is found that in most cases the relevant sections do not contain the transliteration of all the Tamil expressions. They generally insert the Tamil letters such as ೞ, ೞ, etc., in the midst of the Tamil words wherever transliterated."³ [Emphasis mine]. What Krishnan means by "transliterated" is 'transliterated into Grantha script'. It should be noted that Krishnan refers to ೞ as a Tamil letter even when used within an overall Sanskrit text. For examples Krishnan refers to South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 3, p. 453, where the Grantha characters in the original inscription are transliterated into Devanagari characters. This is shown in Exhibit 7. A copy of the actual lines of the inscription corresponding to the transliterated lines in Exhibit 7 is given in Exhibit 8.

³pp. 242-43

Fourth Plate : Second Side.

50 संगिनी चित्तवृत्तिः [1*] नित्योत्तुंगशुचिरभिजनः शाश्वती कीर्तिरुच्चैः
 51 प्रज्ञा चेति प्रथितवशसो यस्य वंशव्रतानि ॥ [२४*] ¹वृत्तावदातो विन-
 52 यैकपावम् प्रभुः पिता यस्य पितामहश्रीः [1*] प्राज्ञः प्रसन्नः² प्रथिताभि-
 53 जात्यः] श्रीश्रेष्ठिशर्मा श्रवणीयकीर्तिः ॥ [२५*] पाण्ड्यान्ववायविलका-
 54 त्पुण्यश्लोकात्परान्तकात् [1*] नारायणादेवादीराद्धीमत्-
 55 पुरोगमः ॥ [२६*] वटकळव^३ राष्ट्रतो^३ [5*] ग्रहारम् महितगुणम् मणियाच्चिना-
 56 मधेयम् [1*] अलभत मतिमाननूनसारम् विहिततिचैचुटमंगलामि-
 57 धानम् ॥ [२७*] स राजा रञ्जिताशेषभूचक्रशशक्रविक्रम [1*] षोडशे राज्य-
 58 वर्षे स्वे सादितारातिमण्डलः ॥ [२८*] राजासिंहकुळकी^४त्युक्ते] रा-

Fifth Plate: First Side.⁴

59 छे प्रतिष्ठितम् [1*] चूलालयोज्वल^६ ग्राममा[व]सन्नमरोपमः ॥ [२९*] अ-
 60 नूनलक्ष्मी^६ अण्डमाजम् ^७नन्दिसयकैपुक्त्ता^७रमिधानमाजम् [1*] कारा-

Exhibit 7. Examples of use of Tamil LLLA in the midst of Grantha script, which is transliterated into Devanagari

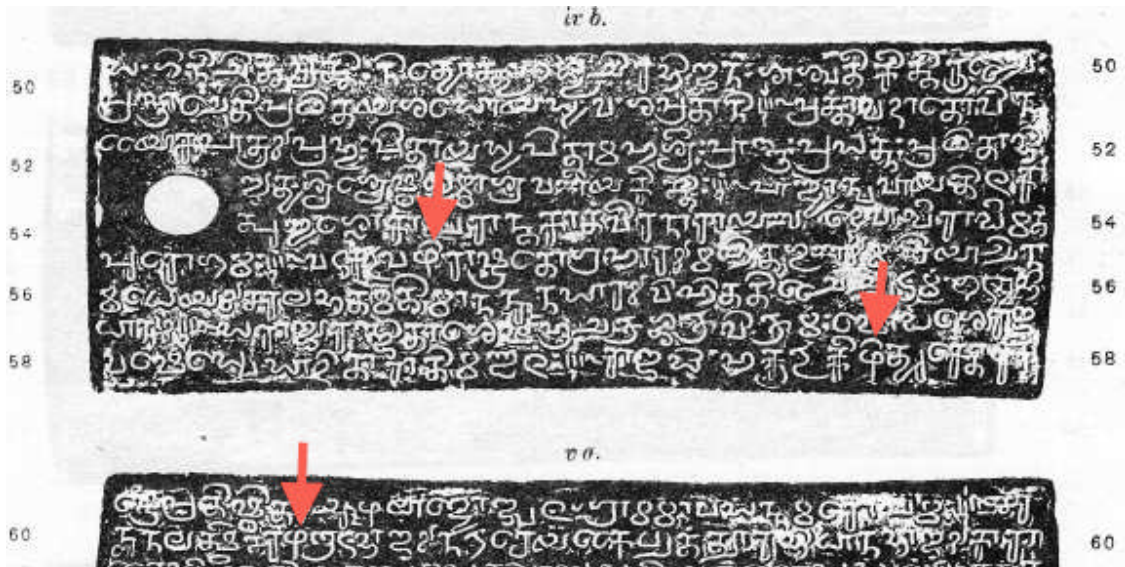


Exhibit 8. Examples of use of Tamil LLLA in the midst of Grantha script in Sinnamanur Plates, South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 3, no. 206, opposite p. 453

It should be pointed out that in Exhibit 8, when the Grantha letters were transliterated into Devanagari in line 60, along with *la* (LLLA), *nā* (NNNA) was also rendered as Tamil and not transliterated into Devanagari, which stands for Grantha in this case.

In the same Indo-Iranian Journal article, Krishnan refers to another “inscription having Sanskrit and Tamil sections portions both written in the Grantha script.”⁴This is the Chintakamanta Grant of Somesa described by H. K. Narasimhaswami and K. G. Krishnan.⁵ Exhibit 9 presents the statement of Narasimhaswami and Krishnan regarding the use of LLLA in the inscription.

The charter which belongs to the chief of Kalukāḍapura is composed in Sanskrit and Tamil languages and engraved in the Grantha script assignable palaeographically to the 13th century. While the stone inscriptions of this family found in the Cuddapah and parts of the Anantapur Districts contain an admixture of Grantha and Tamil, this copper-plate charter, the only one known so far of this family, uses the Grantha script throughout, even for the portion of the text which is in Tamil. In doing so, the scribe of the record has here and there used the Tamil *k* (*āga*, line 55, *bhaṭṭaṅku* line 64, etc.). The use of the Tamil *ā* (line 66), *ra* (lines 49, 50, etc.), *la* (lines 63, etc.), *ḷa* (lines 46, 49, 59, etc.) and the dot (*pulli*, lines 34, 62, 74, etc.), may also be noted.

Exhibit 9. H. K. Narasimhaswami and and K. G. Krishnan on the use of LLLA in Chintakamanta grant, Epigraphia Indica, vol. 17, no. 32, p. 175-76

Exhibit 10 shows an example of the use of LLLA in the Chintakamanta grant.

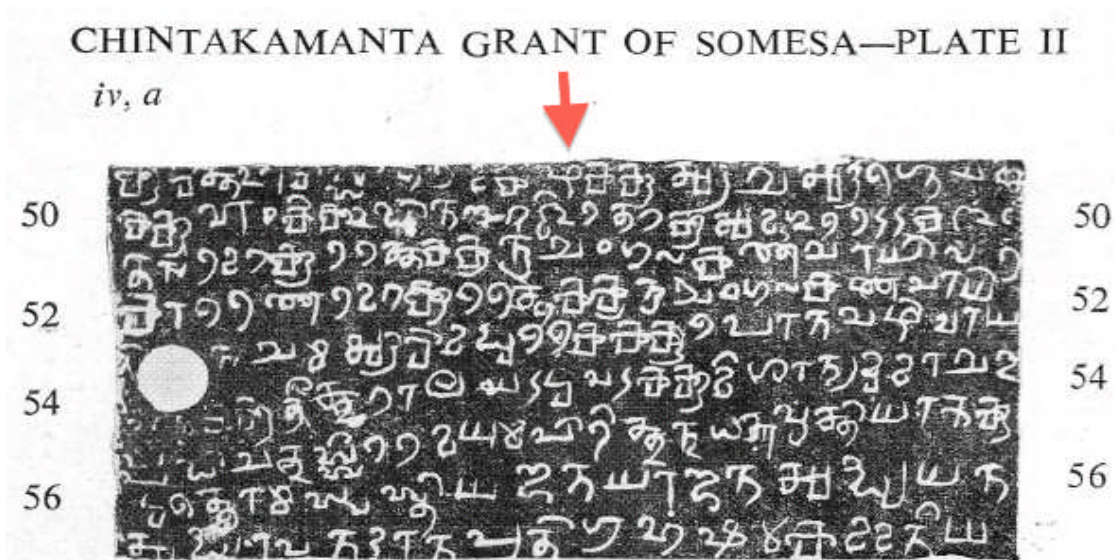


Exhibit 10. The use of Tamil LLLA amidst Grantha in Chintakamanta grant.

⁴p. 243

⁵Epigraphia Indica, vol. 37, pp.175ff.

Exhibit 11 shows the transliteration of the relevant portion of the grant by H. K. Narasimhaswami and K. G. Krishnan.

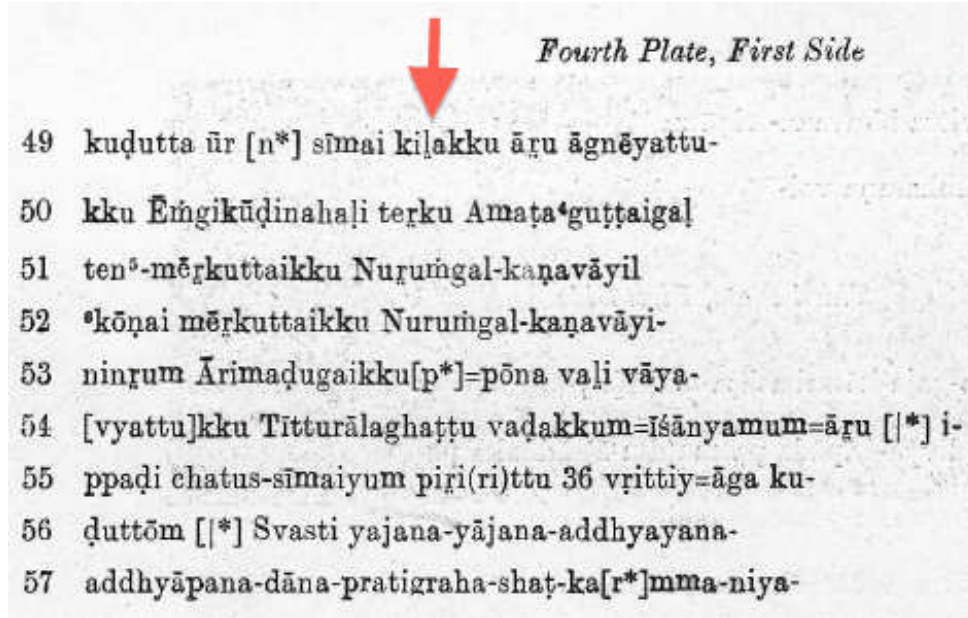


Exhibit 11. Transliterated excerpt from the Chintakamanta grant showing the use of LLLA, Epigraphia Indica, vol. 37, p.182.

The Tamil letter also is found amidst box-headed characters in the Viḷavaṭṭi grant employing Sanskrit language. The plates have been described by C. R. Krishnamacharlu⁶, who says, “Above all, the employment of the Tamil letter for *la* in Viḷavaṭṭi (1.13) is noteworthy and indicates the influence of Tamil on the composer of this grant though it originated in and related to the Telugu country.”⁷ [Emphasis mine] The relevant text transliterated in English is shown in Exhibit 12.

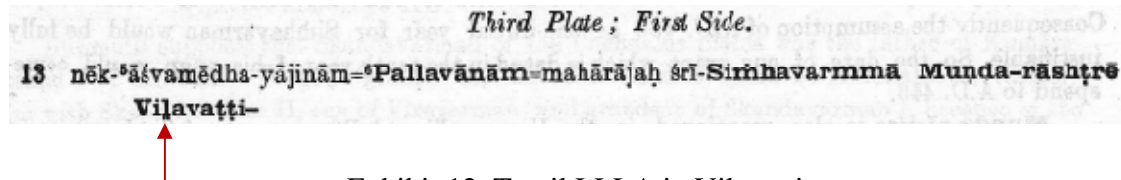


Exhibit 12. Tamil LLLA in Viḷavaṭṭi grant

⁶Epigraphia Indica, vol. 24, no. 43, pp. 296ff

⁷Epigraphia Indica, vol. 24, no. 43, p.297

Exhibit 13 below shows the letter LLLA used in the Viḷavaṭṭi grant. Thus we see that the same Tamil letter LLLA is used in contexts involving different languages and different scripts.

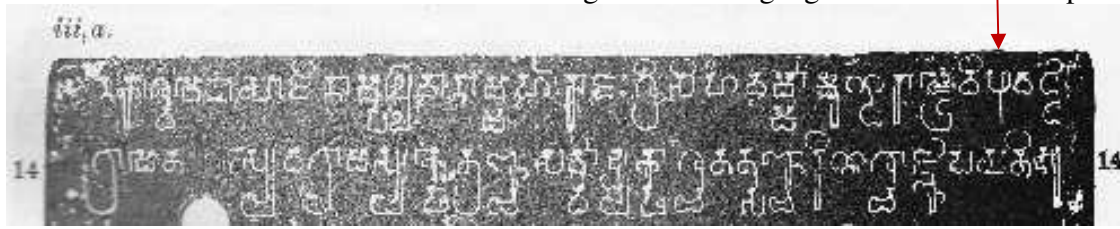


Exhibit 13. Excerpt from Viḷavaṭṭi grant showing the use of Tamil LLLA

Thus it is clearly established by scholars of epigraphy that the letter LLLA that has been used amidst Grantha letters has been Tamil LLLA and that Grantha had no LLLA of its own. (Tamil LLLA has even been used amidst the box-headed characters used in the Telugu country.)

Therefore, as far as the traditional Grantha script is concerned, there is no basis for adding LLLA to it.

Frits Staal, a Sanskrit scholar, who was not an epigraphist used confusing terminology in discussing the occurrence of LLLA in Jaiminīya texts. He referred to “Tamil-Malayalam ḷ” as “Grantha ḷ - Malayalam ḷ”.⁸ See Exhibit 14. Obviously, he did not know that Tamil ḷ and Malayalam ḷ had their origin in the Tamil Vaṭṭeḷuttu script and not in the Grantha script. So Staal’s use of “Grantha ḷ” was in error and offers no basis to include LLLA in the Grantha repertoire.

There are also other features from which it is evident that the Kōṭuntirappuḷḷi śākhā is J. The “Tamil-Malayalam” ḷ (Grantha ḷ - Malayalam ḷ) occurs under certain conditions⁸ in stead of ḷ, e.g.: the *stobha* *ī-ā* at the end of a JGG based upon JS I.2.3.1.9 (cf. GG 321.1-2).

Exhibit 14. Frits Staal’s erroneous terminology of “Grantha ḷ”

The use of LLLA in the Samavedic texts as given in the example in L2/12-039 should be considered as no different from any of the examples cited above where LLLA occurs amidst Grantha characters and has been called by epigraphists as Tamil LLLA. For another example, see Exhibit 15 for a Sanskrit text in an inscription (no. 472 of 1909) in Āḷvār Tirunakari.

⁸Staal (1961: 69)

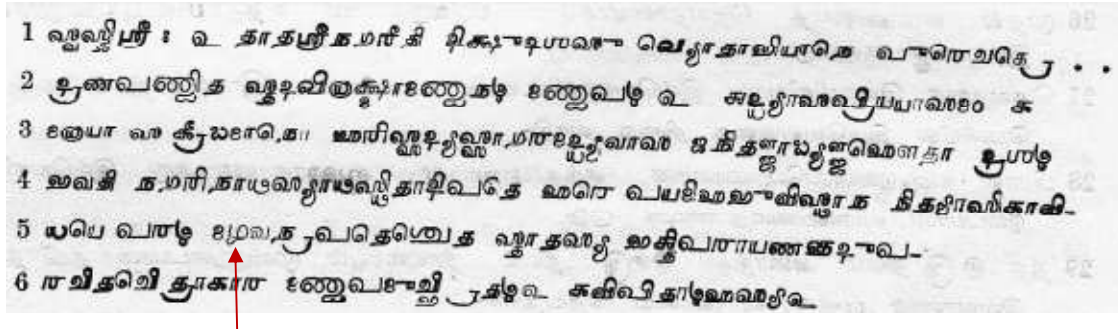


Exhibit 15. ĀlvārTirunakari inscription showing the use of LLLA amidst Grantha characters
(Source: South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 26, no. 496, p.334)

As in earlier examples, here Tamil LLLA is used amidst Grantha characters. Although used in an otherwise Sanskrit verse, the reason for the use of LLLA is that the word, in which it occurs, *malava* (மழவ), is a Tamil name. The inscriber has used Grantha *ma* and Grantha *va* but had to borrow Tamil *la* to render the Tamil name. This linguistic fact has to be preserved by encoding LLLA as Tamil and not as Grantha.

This issue is also similar to persons using English letters in Tamil words such as ‘firaññs’, ‘fñññññ’, ‘பவாஃff’, which one finds on the Web where a few mix English ‘f’ with Tamil characters. One cannot advocate the addition of English (or Latin) *f* to Tamil block based on such usage.

Data Entry and Data Use

A very serious problem will ensue if LLLA is coded as Grantha LLLA. As a person who has been using epigraphic data on an ongoing basis for decades, I am interested in preserving the fidelity of the potential database of encoded inscriptions to the information the scholarly epigraphists have developed over more than a century. Moreover, I am interested in the ability of the future users of the epigraphic database to search and find needed data in the database.

With respect to the fidelity of the database to existing epigraphic knowledge, we need to ensure what is in the published epigraphic reports are encoded accurately. For instance, consider the word ‘Rājendracōladevaṛkku’ presented in Exhibit 16.

மானக்கவாசமு ஜொகெடம் கா[வ]ம் கடுமுரட் கடாசமு மாப்பொரு[த]ணடாழ்
 க்கொண்ட கொப்பாகெலவரிவநாக உடையார்(ர்) ப்ரீராஜெனுவொழுவெவ[டு]
 யாண்டு யிசு-ஆளுவது ஜெயக்கொ[ண்*]டசொழமண்[ட]லத்து னாந்துக்காட்டு-
 [கொட்டத்து]. . . . காட்டு சி[ய]புரமான ப்ரீபரா[ந்த]கச்சுருப்பெழிமங்கலத்து
 வவெவெயொந் கையெழுத்த[ி*] [எயில்]காட்டு நகரம் காஞ்சிபுர[த்]து திருகாரை-

Exhibit 16. LLLA occurring amidst Grantha characters in a Tamil word in South Indian Inscriptions, vol. 8, no. 5, p. 4

This word occurs in the midst of a Tamil inscription of the time of Rājendra Cōḷa in the 11th century. The letters before and after LLLA are Grantha characters. If there is only one way to encode LLLA, as Tamil LLLA, whoever enters the data will encode it in only one way, as Tamil LLLA. If on the other hand, LLLA could be encoded as Grantha too, how will LLLA be entered in this case? A data entry person most likely will encode it as Grantha since the letters before and after are Grantha. This changes the epigraphic fact as scholars have concluded for more than a century. As often seen in inscriptions, the letters preceding and following LLLA can be rendered in Tamil or Grantha letters in at least four possible combinations with LLLA remaining identical in all cases. However, different data entry persons might choose different LLLA in the different cases. Now consider a long name in which LLLA occurs multiple times and the possible combinations increase significantly. Now can anyone imagine a person trying to search the database and getting all the occurrences involving the use of LLLA? The use of such a database will be a nightmare. On the other hand, if LLLA is going to be encoded as Tamil, then it will be a much cleaner database and easier to use.

As a result of the considerable havoc adding LLLA will cause to data entry and use of the potentially enormous corpus of epigraphic information, I request the UTC to reject the addition of LLLA to the Grantha repertoire.

Conclusion

Epigraphists and scholars using epigraphic data like me form a major segment of the future users of the Grantha encoding in Unicode. The Grantha repertoire in the Government of India's proposal which has been approved by UTC is the optimal solution to the Grantha encoding issue. Any addition of letters unique to Tamil (vis-à-vis traditional Grantha repertoire) to the Grantha repertoire advocated by the proposal L2/12-039 will cause enormous damage to the interests of epigraphists and other scholars by making the digital corpus unreliable. Therefore, I urge the Unicode Technical Committee to reject the proposal L2/12-039 and stick with the Government of India's proposal already approved by UTC.

References

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