


**LECTURE AT
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Social History of India – An Overview 1 - HIERARCHY

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SOCIETY AND RELIGION -- CONVERSATIONS :



“No **social study** that does not come back to the problems of **biography, of history** and of their intersections within a society **has completed its intellectual journey**” [C. Wright Mills, 1959:3]

“To unravel the creating and modulating of religious identities, is a far more complex process than the chronicling of religious activities” [R. Thapar, 1996:24]

HIERARCHY

Relook at Interpretations of Caste?

- ⌘ Existing interpretations exclusively based on texts. This means that the emphasis is on looking at only dvijatis (3 upper castes)
- ⌘ Most texts were prescriptive and therefore rules and obligations – what about practice?
- ⌘ Lower orders at the receiving end as passive recipients – did they have no agency?
- ⌘ How does one explain diversity in Indian society?

SOCIAL ORDER IN EARLY INDIA

Its Ideological Foundations

SOME KEY WORDS

DHARMA

An Innate Natural Order

A Heard 'Shruti' Tradition

Becomes the basis of Law

As the Remembered 'Smriti'
Tradition

Origins in the Great Sacrifice
– Universal Cosmic Being
'Purusa'

VARNA-JATI

'Varnas' (Castes) born out of
the Cosmic Being

The four **varnas** –
Brahmanas, Kshatriya,
Vaisyas, Sudras

Notion of mixed castes as
'Sankirna **jatis**'

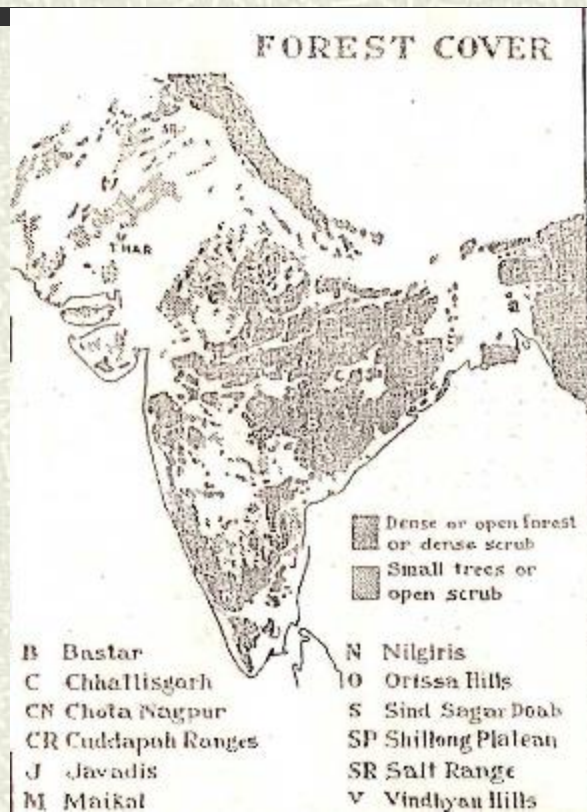
Change in the ideology

Rise of Sramanic sects and
the **conflict between Jati
and Varna**

Negotiating with:

- # **MEANINGS: ANTYAS/MLECCHAS**
 - # **OUT-”CASTE” – ISSUES OF HIERARCHY**
 - # **OUT-”SIDER” – ISSUES OF DIVERSITY**
 - # **DIFFERENCES IN ORIGIN**
 - # **THE PRIMEVAL SACRIFICE – ANTYAS**
 - # **FALL FROM STATUS – MLECCHAS**

 - # **ALTERNATIVES AND PROPER NAMES**
 - # **(a) of profession (b) of ethnic/regional**
-



Categories of Economic Groups

Questions of Heterogeneity

- # **Hunting and Gathering** Communities – different stages – movement & migrations
- # **Pastoralists** and Nomadic **Cultivators** – Shifting
- # **Peasant Communities** – Settled? Famines and displacement
- # **Urban Communities** – Traders, Merchants – Travellers and Itinerant

Broad stages in economic change

Sharma et. al

‡ Stage I

‡ Bronze Age Urban Experiment (c. 2600-1500 BCE)

‡ Pastoral Phase (c. 1500-1000 BCE) [**Origin of 'caste'**]

‡ Plough Cultivation & Agricultural Eco. (c. 1000-600 BCE)

‡ Iron production in crafts & agriculture (600-322 BCE)

‡ Stage II

‡ State Control of Production (c. 322-200 BCE)

‡ Small Farms, money economy and Roman trade (c. 200BCE-CE)

‡ Feudal Beginnings (c. 300 – 600 CE)

Subcontinent & Linear Economic Change

- ‡ **Stage I – Only the perspective of the Indus and Ganga valley – Regions other than these?**
- ‡ **Stage II – A supposed pan Indian Perspective? Were controls equal in all regions?**
- ‡ **Above all – Interdependence of modes of production – Limited discussion**
- ‡ **Argument – for a dominant agrarian mode of production – is this exaggerated**
- ‡ **Role of transport, rainfall, irrigation, labour, type of land – variance in these in the context of regions**
- ‡ **SOLUTION – time and space in terms of economic change --**

Caste and Class

- # Economic change and the changing of hierarchy – eg. 6th century BCE
- # Expansion of Agriculture – the marginalization of hunters etc. – 4th BCE
- # Pastoral communities and Trade – Deccan 1st century CE onwards
- # Continuous process of the making of peasants to castes – DD Kosambi et al – the feudal social order

Beyond 'Caste', Individual Names in negotiating with:

Three ideological and social settings:

- **Sramanic sects** and their ideological moorings (renunciation) and regional spread
- Limitations of Dharma and **potential of Bhakti – devotional theism**
- Opening up of spaces as a result of **political and economic interests – trade/travel and arrival of new people**

Sramanic sects – the alternative

Traveling Monks --- new regions and peoples

Institutionalization of the Sangha

Patronage and sub-sect formation - Deccan

Transformation of Buddhism – the lower orders

The Jains – western India, southern India

Southern texts – Sangam- the Buddhist and Jains as ‘outsiders’

Dharma and Bhakti

- Mahabharata – (a) Nisada woman and her sons (b) the Ekalavya story
- Ramayana – (a) Guha chief of the Nisadas (b) the loyal devotee Sabari
- Puranas – Regional spread/local contexts eg. The Asura Prahlad and Chenchu Lakshmi – Abobilam, Nallamalai hills, AP
- Names of Individual Bhaktas – ‘outcastes’
- Intermingling of Sufi and Bhakti traditions – ‘outsiders’

The 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' -- **Break down of binaries**

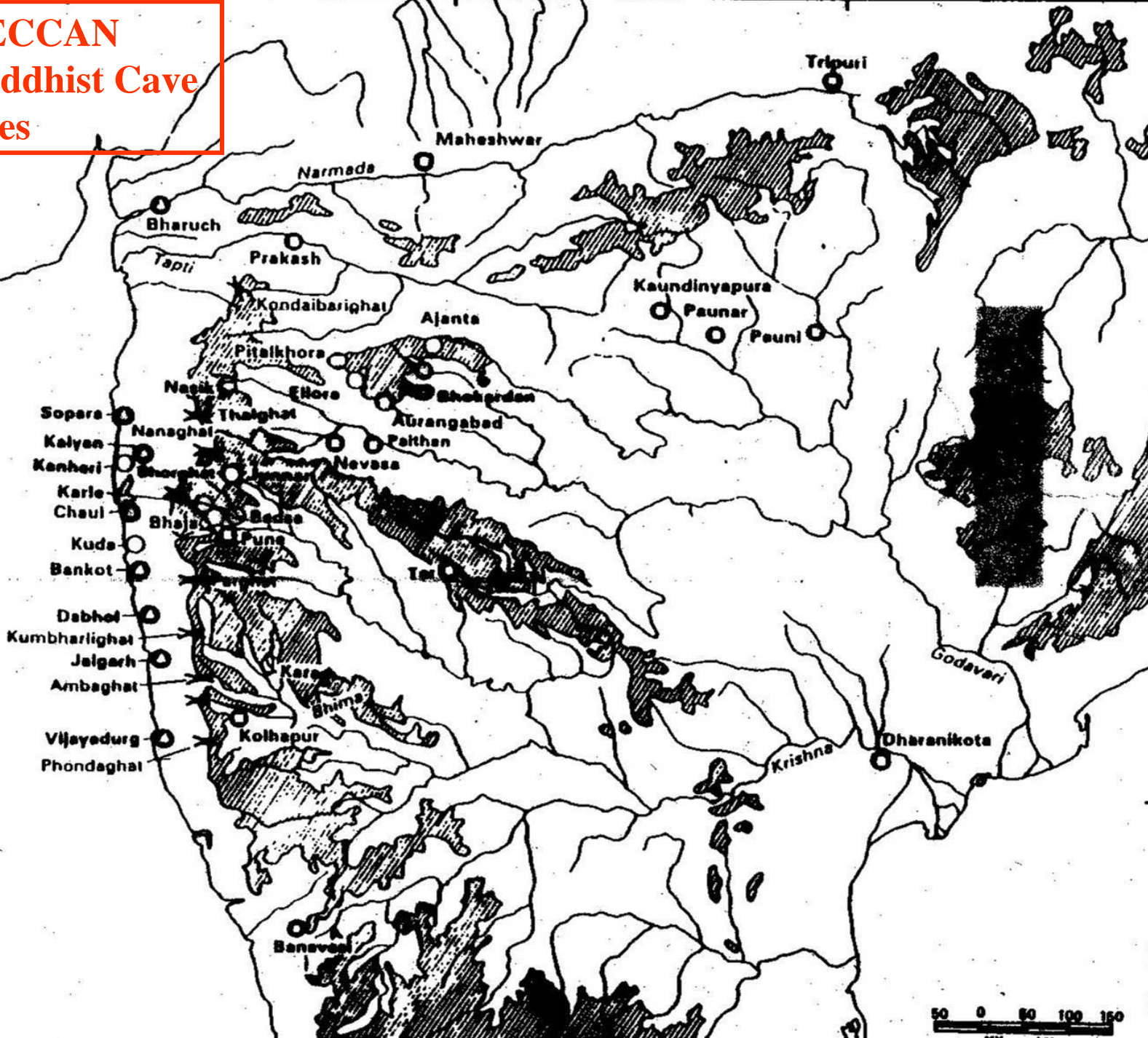
Understanding built on **dependence of the
'Other'**

Necessities of life and **grey areas of
interaction**

The forest as a potential **zone for expansion
and exploitation**

**Both benign and aggressive attitudes with
the 'other' reflected in literature**

DECCAN Buddhist Cave Sites



- Ports
- Settlements
- Caves
- ✕ Passes

▨ Above 500 m

50 0 50 100 150

SAMPLE EARLY DONATORY BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS*
CENTRAL INDIA 2ND BCE – 2ND AD

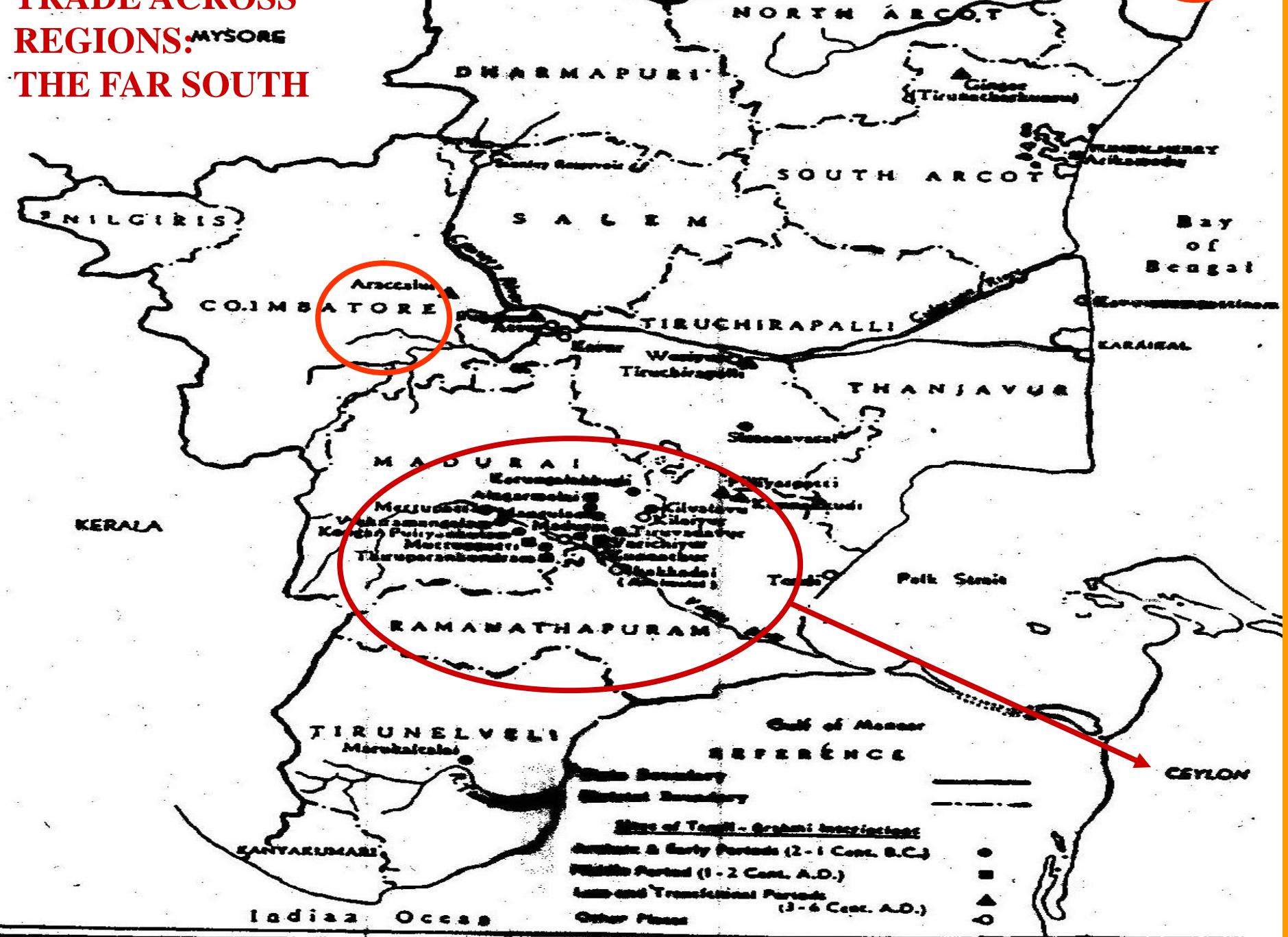
IN.	PN	Location	NAME	Alluding to	Ref./Remarks
81	28	Sanchi	<i>kamika</i> (labourer)	Gift of the labourer, <u>Atṭha.</u>	<i>Atṭhas kamikas</i> <i>dānang</i> (Jas Bu <i>Epigraphica Ind</i> p. 98).
201	29	Sanchi	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of <u>Vesasamandatā</u> , daughter-in-law of <u>Patithiya gahapati</u>	
202	29	Sanchi	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of the <i>gahapati</i> <u>Patithiya</u> from <u>Tumbavana.</u>	
206	30	Sanchi	<i>setthin</i>	Gift of <u>Nāgā</u> , the wife of the <u>Kamdaḍigāmiya</u> <i>setthin.</i>	
209	30	Sanchi	<i>lēkhaka</i> (clerk)	Gift of the <i>lēkhaka</i> <u>Mūlagiri.</u>	
246	33	Sanchi	<i>setthin</i>	Gift of <u>Kaniyāsi</u> , mother of <i>setthin.</i>	
248	33	Sanchi	<i>setthin</i>	Gift of a <i>setthin</i> , an executor of repairs.	<i>setthinno patikan</i> <i>kārikāna dānan</i> (<i>Epigraphica In</i> II, p. 100).
255	34	Sanchi	<i>Setthin</i>	Gift of <u>Kujara</u> , brother of a <i>setthin.</i>	
269	35	Sanchi	<i>vāñija</i>	Gift of <i>vāñija</i> <u>Sirigupta</u>	
271	35	Sanchi	<i>rājalipikāra</i> (royal scribe)	Gift of the <i>rājalipikāra</i> <u>Subāhita.</u>	

SAMPLE EARLY DONATORY BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS*
WESTERN DECCAN 2ND BCE - 4TH AD

IN	PN	Location	NAME	Alluding to	Ref./Remarks
986	102	Kanheri	<u>suvana-kōkāra</u>	Gift of the goldsmith (<i>suvanakō kāra</i>) <u>Samidata</u> of <u>Kalyāna</u> .	
987	102	Kanheri	<i>vāñijaka</i>	Gift of the <i>vāñijaka</i> (trader) brothers, <u>Gajasēna</u> and <u>Gajamita</u> .	
993	103	Kanheri	<i>hērañika</i> (treasurer)	Gift of <u>Sivapālitanikā</u> , (wife of the <i>hērañika</i> <u>Dhamnaka</u>).	
001	105	Kanheri	<i>nēgama gahapati</i>	Establishment of a cave (<i>lena</i>) by the <i>nēgama gahapati</i> .	<i>putasa negamassa gahapatisa</i> (Jas Burgess, <i>Archaeological Surveys of Western India</i> , p. 86).
005	105	Kanheri	<u>mañikāra</u>	Gift of the jeweller (<i>mañikāra</i>) <u>Nāgapālita</u> , the inhabitant of <u>Soparaka</u> .	
032	108	Kanheri	<u>kammāra</u>	Gift of the <i>kammāra</i> <u>Nada</u> from <u>Kalyāna</u> .	
035	109	Mahakal	<i>brāhmana</i>	Gift of a <i>brāhmana</i> of the <u>Gotama</u> <u>gotra</u> .	
050	111	Kuda	<i>brāhmana</i>	Gift of the <u>bammani</u> (<i>brāhmana</i> woman) <u>Bhaiyilā</u> , wife of the <i>bammhana upāsaka</i> <u>Ayitilu</u> .	
051	111	Kuda	<u>mālākara</u>	Gift of the <i>mālākara</i> (gardener) <u>Śivapīṭa</u> , son of the <i>mālākara</i> <u>Vadhuka</u> .	
053	111	Kuda	<i>rājamaccha</i>	Gift of <u>Gōyammā</u> , the daughter of the royal minister (<i>rājamaccha</i>) <u>Hāla</u> .	
1052	112	Kuda	<u>lōhavāñiyiya</u>	Gift of the ironmonger (<i>lōha-vāñiyiya</i>) <u>Mahika</u> .	

PN	Location	NAME	Alluding to	Ref./Remarks
1206	141	Amaravati	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of an <i>upāsikā</i> , the daughter of a <i>gahapati</i> .
1209	141	Amaravati	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of <u>Sivaka</u> , the son of the <i>gahapati</i> <u>Pusila</u> .
1213	142	Amaravati	<i>vāṇija</i>	Gift of <u>Mūlasiri</u> , the son of the <i>vāṇija</i> <u>Bodhisamma</u> , along with his mother.
1214	142	Amaravati	<i>vāṇiya</i>	Gift of <u>Budhi</u> , son of the <i>vāṇiya</i> <u>Kanha</u> .
1216	142	Amaravati	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of a <i>caitya</i> by the <i>gahapati</i> <u>Hagha</u> .
1220	143	Amaravati	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of the son of the <i>gahapati</i> <u>Kanhati</u> .
1221	143	Amaravati	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of a coping stone by <u>Ajuṇa</u> the grandson of the <i>gahapati</i> <u>Mariti</u> .
1222	143	Amaravati	<i>gahapati</i>	Gift of the grandson of the <i>gahapati</i> <u>Pāpin</u> .
1229	144	Amaravati	<i>vāṇiya</i>	Gift of a <i>caitya</i> pillar by the <i>vāṇiya</i> <u>Kuta</u> .
1230	144	Amaravati	<u><i>gadhika</i></u> <i>vāṇiya</i>	Gift to the <i>saṅgha</i> by the <i>gadhika</i> (perfumer) <u>vāṇiya Siridata</u> , the son of the <i>vāṇiya</i> <u>Dhammila</u> .
1239	146	Amaravati	<i>vāṇiya</i> , <i>hēranika</i>	Gift of the wife of an <i>upāsaka</i> the <i>vāṇiya</i> <u>Nāgatisa</u> , together with

**TRADE ACROSS
REGIONS:
THE FAR SOUTH**



EARLY DONATORY TAMIL BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS - c. 2nd BCE - 4th AD

SN	Site/Location	Ins.No.	Date	NAME	Alluding to	Ref.	Remarks
1.	AMMANKOYIL-PATTI	XXVIII 84 A/B	2-4 AD	Viyakkag Kōpaṅ Kanpatōvaṅ	Son of Sub. Chief-kilar Fr.PL Off.	ETE p.439	Pool exca- vated.
2.	ARACCALUR Coimbatore Dt.	XIX 72 Ara: 1	3-4 AD	Tēvaṅ Cētaṅ	Trader in Precious stones	SOI p. 67	7 beds made
3.	ARITTAPATTI	7 A/B	2 BCE- 1 AD	Cilivaṅ Ariṅvaṅ Vēliyaṅ	Minor Chief Fr. PL	ETE p.325	Cave given
4.	ALAKARMALAI Madurai Dt.	X 30 Ala: 1	2-1 BCE	Ātaṅ	Goldsmith Artisan Fr. PL	SOI p. 63	Gift of
5.	----DO----	X 32 Ala: 3	2-1 BCE	1.Kaniṅkaṅ 2.Kani-y aa (n)taṅ 3.Iravi-I	1 and 2 Children 3.Father KIN	SOI p. 63	Pos. astro- logers'
6.	----DO----	X 34 Ala: 5	2-1 BCE	Viyakaṅ Kanatikāṅ	Trader in Salt	SOI p. 63	----
7.	----DO----	X 35 Ala: 6	2-1 BCE	1.Ātaṅ 2.Kana (-k-)ka Ātaṅ	1.Son 2.Father KIN	SOI p.63	----
8.	----DO----	X 36 Ala: 7	2-1 BCE	Sapamitā	Nun BUDH?	SOI p. 63	NTN 1 WOM
9.	----DO----	X 37 Ala: 8	2-1 BCE	Netumāk(a)ṅ	Trader in Sugar	SOI p. 63	----
10.	----DO----	X 39 Ala: 10	2-1 BCE	Kalumāraṅ	Donor?	SOI p. 64	Gift of
11.	----DO----	X 41 Ala: 12	2-1 BCE	Kasapaṅ	Monk BUDH?	SOI p. 64	NTN
12.	----DO----	X 43 Ala: 14	2-1 BCE	Ela(v)a Ātaṅ	Trader in Cloth Fr. PL	SOI p. 64	----
13.	----DO----	X 44 Ala: 15	2-1 BCE	Tiyag Cantāṅ	P Name	SOI p. 64	----
14.	ANAIMALAI Madurai Dt.	XIV 55 Anai: 1	1-2 AD	1. Nātaṅ 2. Ēri Aritaṅ 3. Attuvāyi 4. Aratta Kāyipaṅ	1. Donor 2, 3, 4 Donees Monks Fr. PL	SOI p. 65	Gift of beds 2. & 3 TN 4. NTN
15.	EDAKAL -A-1	XXVI 79 A/B	2-4 AD	Oppanappa Vira(n)	P Name Minor Chief	ETE p.431	----
16.	----DO----A-2	XXVI 80 A/B	2-4 AD	Katumiputta	Cera Chief?	ETE p.433	Suffix putta



ASSERTION OF PROPER NAME

*“camakārasa nāgaupajhayāputasa vidhikasa
samatukasa sabhayakasa sabhatukasa
putasa ca nagasa samadhutukasa
sanatinitabaindhavasa deyadhamma”*

Punaghagatapato

[Luders List 1273: 151-152]

**Vidhika, son of the teacher
Nāga of carmakāra jāti gifts
an
Auspicious vase along with
his
mother, wife, brothers, son,
daughters and other
relatives and friends**

**PS: TODAY THIS IS STATE
EMBLEM OF THE GOVT.
OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

BEYOND THE FORMAL

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IF TREATED ONLY IN FORMAL TERMS and indexed according to established religions, LEAVES US WITH A PROVERTY OF UNDERSTANDING. For, together With the formal there is THE CONSTANT PRESENCE OF THE INFORMAL AND OF BELIEFS UNCONSTRAINED BY TEXTS

