

# Towards a South Asian Diplomatics: Cosmopolitan Norms and Regional Idioms in the Use of Documents

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## **Introduction**

South Asia has since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE been the center of a distinctive diplomatic culture. Despite the twists and turns of history, and the extreme ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Subcontinent and its peripheries, this culture (as I will argue) exhibits a demonstrable set of family resemblances that appear with great continuity over many centuries. These features include both formal structural patterns and distinctive phraseology. This article represents a preliminary reconnaissance to identify some of the oldest distinctive features as they appear in the early records. As will be evident, the results will be limited by the eclectic character of the sparse sources surviving from the first millennium CE and before, but it should also become clear that these sources illustrate the emergence over time of norms for the production of official documents, norms that grew more formalized and more elaborate as they were adapted to serve other and more specialized legal or administrative purposes.

This diplomatic culture can be investigated on the basis of two interconnected sets of sources: actual surviving documents, and learned texts prescribing the form of such documents (and sometimes exemplifying them). The latter texts include Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, the classical Dharmaśāstras, including the medieval commentaries and digests based thereon, and formulary compendia from the later medieval period, which focused on providing models. Donald Davis (2016) translates and discusses a short section of the medieval digest *Smṛticandrikā* by Devaṅṇabhaṭṭa on this subject. He finds there a sharp distinction between "royal documents," which serve strictly political

rather than “legal” purposes, and “popular documents” which are precisely legal in the sense of justiciable. One formal difference is that a popular document is authenticated by witnesses, while a royal document stands on a king’s own authority and is not, Davis says, “a record of legal arrangements intended for evidentiary use in courts” (Davis 2016: 173). In spite of this, however, we will note that in practice the distinction gets blurred.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest reference to documents as legal instruments and evidence in court is probably Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* (composed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and revised a century or two later).<sup>2</sup> Kauṭilya is unique among ancient authors in referring to such documents with the word *deśa* (3.1.19, perhaps with the literal meaning “evidence”);<sup>3</sup> elsewhere the term *āgama* is employed (*Arthaśāstra* 4.6.7; *Mānavadharmasāstra* 8.200; *Yājñavalkyadharmasāstra* 2.27),<sup>4</sup> or words that refer to the writing (*lekha*) or physical support (*patra/patra/pātra*, *paṭa*).<sup>5</sup> The shastric redactor of the *Arthaśāstra* (2.10) further adds a discussion of royal decrees (*śāsana*) and their written form (*lekha*), which provides an opportunity for offering guidance on good composition, but the

- 1 It is true that a king cannot be sued in a court of law, but royal documents were certainly offered as evidence in lawsuits. In his lengthy comments on the plaint in *Nāradaśmṛti*, Asahāya quotes a stanza: “With regard to an edict (*ājñā*), a document (*lekha*), a title (*paṭṭaka*), a grant (*śāsana*), a pledge (*ādhi*), a letter (*patra*), a purchase (*vikraya*), a sale (*kraya*), the first to bring one of these matters to the attention of the king is known as the plaintiff, according to the experts in the rules” (2.38: *ājñā lekhaḥ paṭṭakāḥ śāsanam vā, ādhiḥ patraṃ vikrayo vā krayo vā | rājñe kuryāt pūrvam āvedanam yas tasya jñeyah pūrvapakṣah vidhijñāih*). Asahāya goes on to give examples of plaints supported by a *śāsana*: “He does not heed the edict of the king. ... He has seized this village granted to me, and is enjoying [the revenue from it]; it is mine; here is the grant” (*ayaṃ madīyaṃ śāsanagrāmam avaṣṭabhyā bhūṅkte. mamedam. śāsanam tiṣṭhai*) (Lariviere 1989: I, 39–40; tr. adapted from II, 236). I give examples of such plaints in Lubin 2013 and 2015.
- 2 See for example *Arthaśāstra* 3.1.19, 3.16.29, 4.6.9, 4.9.15. *Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtra* 16.10 and 16.14–15, where a written document (*likhita*, *lekhyā*) is mentioned alongside witnesses (and in 16.10, also possession, *bhukti*) as proof in a dispute over property, is probably based on *Arthaśāstra*, as *Mānavadharmasāstra* and the later Dharma codes certainly are. Written documents are not mentioned in the other Dharmasūtras.
- 3 Olivelle (2013: 52) points out that where Manu quotes a passage from the *Arthaśāstra* containing this term, the commentator Medhātithi does not recognize its meaning. Kauṭilya also employs the word *kaṛaṇa* (evidence, especially in the form of a document, including receipts); see *Arthaśāstra* 3.1.15–16, 3.12.37.
- 4 Meyer (1926) and Kangle (1972: II, 270) take *āgama* to mean “origin” or “acquisition”, respectively.
- 5 A declaration of the result of a court case is called *paścātkāra* (*Arthaśāstra* 3.19.22; *Kātyāyanasṛti* 264); later, the term *jaṣapatra* becomes usual. In the medieval records, terms for various sorts of document proliferate.

structure of such decrees is not prescribed in detail. *Śāsana* here seems to be used as a generic word for any sort of royal communication that is reduced to writing. In addition to the Śāstras, a few medieval formularies have survived, which provide models for documents and letters.<sup>6</sup>

As regards actual documents, it must be emphasized that we must consider not only documents on perishable supports, which for pre-modern periods are very few, but also a large proportion of surviving inscriptions on metal or stone, which are nothing but permanent copies of documents originally drafted on palm leaves, bark, cloth, or the like. Many types of documents described in the learned literature can be found preserved in inscriptional form. The private letter is least well represented, of course, though some of Aśoka's inscriptions as well as the Niya documents take the form of letters from a king to one or more of his officers, on the subject of policy or legal instructions.

### Documents as Sources for Diplomatic Conventions

While it makes good sense to consult learned sources to see how “the tradition” itself canonizes the forms and purposes of documents, the other, more direct but in some ways more daunting approach is to look to the extensive body of surviving documents to identify the building blocks of an emergent diplomatics in the South Asian cultural area. In fact, several scholars working on particular collections or regions have presented case studies.<sup>7</sup> Each of these, naturally enough, attends to the particular corpus at hand. The first study designed to treat early copperplate grants expressly from the standpoint of diplomatics was a 1961 essay by Bahadur Chand Chhabra, who dealt with early North Indian copperplate land-grants as a general type.

My approach depends upon such path-breaking studies, but differs in that I consider documents from a wide variety of periods and regions

6 Ingo Strauch's 2002 edition and translation of the *Lekhapaddhati-Lekhapañcāśikā* includes a valuable discussion of what the older classical Śāstras had to say about documents.

7 For public documents and private letters, Strauch 2002: 68–74; for Newari sales and mortgages, Kölver/Śākya 1985: 31–51; and for Newari donations of the *nikṣepa*-type, Kölver 1997: 126–128. Michaels 2010 surveys the range of published source texts available. South Asian diplomatic conventions are often strikingly similar to those developed in the European tradition, studies of which (especially, Redlich 1907) can provide a framework for comparative analysis. Besides Strauch and Kölver/Śākya, Schneider 2002 and Michaels 2010: 66–67 take steps in that direction.

of India (and Indian-influenced spheres) with an eye to commonalities as well as differences of context and form. My aim is to call attention to patterns across periods, regions, and document types, which point to a diffusion of diplomatic structures and compositional elements. This diffusion, I argue, must be explained in terms of a diffusion of literacy expertise, the precise contours of which remain at this point almost totally obscure. To speak of a “South Asian diplomatics” entails a vast purview, over which no individual could have full command. In default of that, I have been focusing on the older documents from selected but widely dispersed subregions as a way of sampling a wide area and observing the ways in which cosmopolitan norms get introduced into regional literary idioms.<sup>8</sup>

### Formulaic Elements in Aśoka’s Edicts

Although in comparison with all later Indian epigraphy the famous edicts of the Maurya emperor Aśoka (mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, mostly in Prakrit dialects) have generally (and to a large extent quite correctly) been seen as unique in form and purpose—not least for their intensely personal, even confessional, tone—nonetheless the edicts introduce structural elements and even particular expressions that persist in later epigraphy.

Of these one of the most basic features is the embedding of the content of a royal decree within a statement expressing the issuing of the order and/or its recording in writing. The framing devices used in Aśoka’s edicts are not wholly consistent. Leaving aside the salutation to his officers included in some places, most versions of the Minor Rock Edict (MRE; the earliest of Aśoka’s decrees) formally begin:

*devānaṃpiye hevaṃ āha* (“The Beloved of the Gods speaks thus”):<sup>9</sup>

(CONTENT of the decree follows)

The (major) Rock Edicts (RE), issued in years 12 and 13 of his reign, are not regular in format, but RE 3, 5, 6, 9, and 11 all begin with a fuller version of the MRE opening:

8 This is an issue I addressed in Lubin 2013.

9 The texts of the edicts given here follow Bloch 1950.

*devānaṃpiye piyadassi lāja hevaṃ āha:*<sup>10</sup>

(CONTENT)

RE 1 and 14 instead begin with (and RE 4 ends with) a statement that “this *dharm*-inscription was caused to be inscribed” by him:

*iyaṃ dhammalipī devānaṃpriyena priyadassina rāṇṇā lekhāpitā:*<sup>11</sup>

(CONTENT)

The format looks better established by the time of the six Pillar Edicts (PE). Each of these begins with the *hevaṃ āha* formula in its longer Rock-Edict form, and the content of the king’s utterance is prefixed in two cases and closed in PE 6 by a statement that he caused the inscription to be written in the twenty-sixth year since his consecration, adapting the *lekhāpitā* formula used earlier in RE 1 and 14:

*devānaṃpiye piyadassi lāja hevaṃ āhā:*

*saḍuvisativassābhisittena me iyaṃ dhammalipi likhāpitā*

(PE 1, 4, 6):<sup>12</sup>

(CONTENT)

The content of the edict closes with the quotative particle *ti* in PE 1, 2, and 4. The last of the regular set, PE 6, begins by recalling an earlier *dhammalipi likhāpitā* in the twelfth year, and places the *likhāpitā* formula referring to the present inscription at the end.<sup>13</sup> The so-called seventh pillar edict, added solely to the Delhi-Topra pillar one year later, contains in fact a whole further set of short edicts, each introduced by the *hevaṃ āha* formula.

Viewed comparatively in terms of European diplomatics, the *hevaṃ āha* formula seems to serve the double role of *intitulatio* and *promulgatio*, that is, providing the name and title of the issuer and his intended purpose (also called the notification). This dual character shows up clearly in that the verb *āha*, “speaks” (or the passive participle *lekhāpitā*, “was caused to be inscribed [by him]” in RE 1 and 14) is

10 With varying orthography.

11 Girnar reading.

12 Omitted in PE 2 and 3.

13 PE 5 also includes a phrase beginning with *saḍuvisativassābhisittena me* but concludes it with the actual enactment: “in the twenty-sixth year since my consecration, I made these animals inviolable”.

occasionally substituted by some form of the causative verb *ānapayati*, “gives the order”, either conjugated in the active voice or as a past passive participle. We see it first at Brahmagiri and Erragudi in the Mysore region. Brahmagiri and Panguraria stand apart from most versions of the MRE in opening with the formula *devānaṃpiye ānapayati* rather than *devānaṃpiye [hevaṃ] āha*.<sup>14</sup>

Seven copies of the MRE near Mysore also include a supplement not found in elsewhere (often called MRE 2). Most begin with the more usual *hevaṃ devānaṃpiye āha*,<sup>15</sup> but four versions continue by saying that the Rājuka officer is to be given the order (*ānapitaviye/ānapayātha*), and he will in turn convey the order (*ānapayisati*) to the people and the district heads in order that they obey what he says.<sup>16</sup> The recipients of the king’s order are further told in direct address: “You yourselves, order thus by the words of the Beloved of the Gods ...” (*hevaṃ tuṃphe ānapayātha devānaṃpiyavacanena*).<sup>17</sup> Finally the Erragudi edict closes with the words *hevaṃ devānaṃpiye ānapayati*, “thus the Beloved of the Gods orders” (the affirming *dispositio*).<sup>18</sup> The Kosambi inscription also begins *devānaṃpiye ānapayati*.

The two functions of *intitulatio* and *promulgatio* are separated into two distinct clauses in RE 1, 4, and 6 (above), and in RE 3, where the past participle *ānapayite* is substituted for *dhaṃmalipi likhāpitā* in the now separate *promulgatio*:

*devānaṃpiye piyadassi lāja hevaṃ āhā:  
duvāḍasa vassābhisittena me iyaṃ ānapayite:*<sup>19</sup>  
(CONTENT)

14 Gujarra opens: *d[e]v[ānā]ṃpiy[asa] piya[da]sino asokarāja*; Maski opens: *dev[ā]naṃpiyasa asoka[sa] - - - - -*. For the texts of all known copies of the Minor Rock Edicts, I refer to Andersen 1990, with a conspectus of versions in ch. 3.

15 Brahmagiri: *se hevaṃ devānaṃpiyena*; Nittur and Udegolam include *rājā asoko* and have *hevaṃ* just before *āha*.

16 Erragudi and Rajula-Mandagiri read: *yathā devānaṃpiye āhā tathā kaṭaviye rajūke ānapetaviye se dāni jānapadāni ānapayisati raṭhikāni ca*; Nittur and Udegolam instead read: *tuphe ānapayātha rajūkaṃ ānapayisati jānapadaṃ ca janam raṭhikāni ca* (with orthographic variations and some unclear graphs).

17 With minor orthographic variations; Nittur and Udayagiri have a longer version: *hevaṃ tuphe rajukaṃ ānapayātha se dāni devānaṃpiyasa vacanena ānapayisati ti*.

18 Siddapura and Jatinga-Ramesvara have instead: *hevaṃ dhamme devānaṃpiya... kaṭaviye* “Thus *dhamma* is to be performed [by the command of?] the Beloved of the Gods.”

19 The Kalsa reading.

King Piyadassi, Beloved of the Gods, speaks thus:

When I had been consecrated twelve years I issued this command:

...

Hence, the edicts of Aśoka introduce the king's decrees by saying either that he "says thus" or that he "orders" or "causes to be inscribed" those things which he wishes to be enacted by his officers and by the public at large. Introductory clauses of this sort later become a common feature of South Asian royal decrees.

Another documentary convention first attested in Aśoka's edicts is the "perpetuity clause," stereotyped idioms expressing the idea "of long duration" or "as long as the moon and sun," usually inserted near the end of a document, thus constituting an early prototype of the "classical" eschatocol, which calls upon later kings to recognize and enforce the order or deed, and includes penalties and/or imprecations directed at those who would violate its terms:

*etāye atthāye iyaṃ dhaṃmalipi lekhitā; cilatthitikyā hotu tathā ca me pajā anuvattatu*

This *dharm*-inscription was written for this purpose; let it endure long and let my children likewise follow it. (RE 5)

*se etāye atthāye iyaṃ kaṭe puttāpappotike caṃdamasuliyike hotu ti tathā ca anuppaṭipajjāntu ti. ... sattavisativassābhisitena me iyaṃ dhaṃmalipi likhāpāpitā ti etaṃ devānāṃpiye āhā. iyaṃ dhaṃmalipi atta atthi silāthaṃbhāni vā silāphalakāni vā tatta kaṭṭaviyā ena esa cilatthitike siyā.*

I have made this for this purpose: that it may [endure] with my sons and great-grandsons [as long as] the moon and sun, and that they may assent to it. ... When I had been consecrated twenty-seven years I had this *dharm*-inscription inscribed. Thus speaks his majesty: wherever there are stone pillars or stone slabs, this *dharm*-inscription is to be made; may it thereby long endure. (PE 7 [Delhi-Topra])

*[saṃ]ghe [sa]magge kaṭe bhikkhūnaṃ cā bhikkhunīnaṃ cā ti puttāpappotike candamasūriyike ... icchā hi me kiṃti saṃghe samagge cilatthitike siyā ti.*

The *saṃgha* both of monks and of nuns is made united as long as (my) sons and great-grandsons (shall reign, and) as long as the moon and the sun (shall shine) ... For my desire is that the *saṃgha* may be united (and) of long duration.<sup>20</sup> (Sanchi Edict)

This phrase will recur over the centuries in several variations, but always mentioning the moon first, and almost always in deeds of gift of property. So it is especially noteworthy that it assumes this function even in Maurya times. One of Aśoka's other innovations was the gift of man-made 'caves' as residences for ascetics. The cave residences in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills bear inscriptions registering the gifts. The Barabar inscriptions simply say that each individually named cave "was given by King Piyadasi to the Ājīvikas" (*lājinā piyadasinā ... dinā ājīvikehi* [thus caves B2, B4]). For the three Nagarjuni caves, nearby, the nominal grantor is Aśoka's grandson, Daśaratha Devānampiya, but Falk thinks that his role was simply to complete a benefaction initiated by Aśoka before his death, as suggested by the use of the participle *niṣīthā* ("handed over" = Skt. \**niḥsṛṣṭa*) rather than *dinā*, "given".<sup>21</sup> Be that as it may, Daśaratha is clearly imitating Aśoka's formulae, styling himself "Beloved of the Gods", dating the grant in relation to his consecration (in this case, *ānaṃtaliyaṃ abhiṣitenā*, "as soon as [he was] consecrated") and, in all three caves, specifying that the caves are handed over "for as long as the moon and sun" (*ācaṃdamaṣūliyaṃ*)—now using the adverbial form of the compound prefixed with the preposition *ā* (rather than the adjectival *candamasūriyike*).

It is worth noting that these cave-grants represent another precedent that would be repeated down the ages: the fraudulent alteration of property deeds to obscure or alter the original terms of the grant. In most of the Barabar and Narayani cave dedications, an effort was later made to efface the word *ājīvikehi* ("to the Ājīvikas"), no doubt at a time when the caves had been taken over by members of a rival group.

Aśoka's "order-issuing" expressions survive as a legalistic reflex in the *ājñapti*-clause in later inscriptions, which identifies the one issuing the order. When this is the ruler himself, this is indicated by some additional words, such as *svayam* ("myself") or a reference to the king's own mouth (as in Aśoka's RE 6).

20 Translation from Hultzsch 1925: 161.

21 Falk 2006: 256–257. My remarks on the cave inscriptions are based on Falk's texts and images (*ibid.*: 255–279).



## Royal Orders in the Niya Documents

K.R. Norman (1982: §B.7) was the first to observe traces of “covering letters” that accompanied the text of some of Aśoka’s edicts, traces that have been preserved by being inscribed along with the edict.<sup>22</sup> Harry Falk (2006: 57–58) in fact regards all of the so-called Minor Rock Edict 2 as having originally been intended only to communicate instructions to local officials. Some later Indian inscriptions do begin with greetings to local officials, but for the most part, personal letters have not survived, and we must wait for late medieval formularies such as the *Lekhapaddhati* and the *Lokaprakāśa* to see examples.

However, just before and overlapping with the rise of the Pallava and Gupta states, a trading kingdom on the Silk Road at Niya (a.k.a. Shanshan or Kroraina) has left us a trove of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>-century CE letters in Gandhari-derived chancery Prakrit, written in the Kharoṣṭhi script.<sup>23</sup> These are administrative letters from the ruler to an official with instructions for resolution of legal cases. A large proportion of them begin, seemingly in a paraphrase of Aśoka’s *intitulatio*:

*mahanuava maharaya lihati: ...*  
His majesty the king writes: ...

Although the administrative and legal institutions amply reflected in them have many local features not to be found in South Asia proper, the documents as such, in a form of the Gandhara dialect, reflect formal features of Prakrit composition. In any case, although Niya represents a remote outlier in the South Asian cultural sphere, it provides a rich source of exemplars of early Common Era legalese.

To begin with, the majority of the official letters address unresolved legal complaints and disputes. These have a very regular structure. They usually open with the king identifying himself as the author (in the *intitulatio*), then stating the name of the addressee (*inscriptio*) and the purpose of the letter (*promulgatio*):

*mahanuava maharaya lihati:*  
*X-sa maṃtra deti, saca: ...*

<sup>22</sup> For further discussion, see von Hinüber 2010.

<sup>23</sup> The texts of these documents are collected in Boyer et al. 1920–1929, and translated in Burrow 1940.

His majesty the king writes:  
he instructs [officer X], to wit:<sup>24</sup> ...

Next, in the main body of the order (the *contextus*), the petitioner or plaintiff is identified, followed by a summary of the state of the matter:

*ahono iśa Y viṃṇāveti yatha* ... (e.g., nos. 3, 6, 7, 13, 14, 46, etc.)  
Now here Y makes a request that ...

*ahono iśa Y garahati yatha* ... (e.g., nos. 1, 11, 21, etc.)  
Now here Y makes a complaint that ...

The dispute (*vivada*) or complaint having been described, the officer addressed is instructed either to resolve the case himself, or to send the parties to the king's court for final adjudication. In the vast majority of examples, the phrasing here is quite standard, with the essential elements noted below, with common optional clauses and expressions in brackets:

*yahi eda kilamudra atra eśati praṭha atra [eda vivada]  
[samuha] anada prochidavo [śavathena sačhiyena]*<sup>25</sup> ... **yatha  
dhaṃena niče kartavo**

*[[atra] na paribujīśatu [cavala] hastagada [kartavo]  
[rayadvarammi] iśa viśajidavo]*<sup>26</sup>  
*[[iśemi/yaṃ kala rayadvarammi] [samuha] [bhaviṣyati/  
garahiṣyati] niče bhaviṣyati/hačhati/siyati]*<sup>27</sup>

When this sealed wedge-tablet reaches you, you must forthwith here carefully investigate [this dispute] [in person] [with oath and witness], ...; **a decision should be reached according to dharma.**

If you should not understand something [in this], they are [quickly] to be sent here [to the king's court], [having put them] in custody.<sup>28</sup>

24 On the particle *śaca*, see Burrow 1937: 128.

25 Or: *śavatha sasāchīyena*.

26 This clause is included only in nos. 1, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 18, 24, 27, 32, 37, 45, 47, 49, 53, 61, 62, 63, 71, 124, 192, 235, 240, 262, 265, 286, 297, 312, 352, 356, 364, 386, 392, 408, 423, 433, 473, 480, 481, 482, 503, 509, 526, 530, 538, 542, 545, 548, 551, 555, 606, 636, 719, 729, 734, 736, 738, 739, 741; cf. 471, 492.

27 This clause is included only in nos. 3, 24, 27, 32, 45, 47, 53, 61, 62, 71, 235, 240, 260, 265, 312, 344, 347, 352, 356, 364, 386, 423, 433, 473, 480, 481, 484, 503, 509, 538, 545, 555, 606, 636, 729, 736.

28 Nos. 548 and 555 add: "at a time when there is peace and safety (*yogakṣema*) on the road" (*paṃthāśa yoḡācchemakalaṃmi*).

[Here/when-in-the-king's-court [one will be present/make complaint] [in person], **there will be a decision.**]

Several documents describe themselves as conveying a royal order (*anati*),<sup>29</sup> sometimes in the form of a sealed wedge-tablet (*anati kila-mudra*, no. 193). The author may reference an earlier “order-document spelled out in full” (*livi-vistarena anati-lekha*, no. 4) that has not yet been acted upon, or a future order yet to be issued (nos. 169, 169). These letters exhibit the author’s consciousness of their status as documents, and sometimes refer to the need for their own preservation: “This document is to be carefully preserved” (*eṣa lekha [lihitaḡa, pravamṇaḡa]*<sup>30</sup> ... *anada dharidavo*) (Burrow 1937: 34–35, 40, 53).

Although nothing quite like these letters has survived from India proper, we should note that Indian grants likewise begin with the king’s statement of authority, often designating the official responsible for executing the order (*ājñapti*) and the petition (*vijñapti*) that formed the occasion for the decree (*śāsana*).

## Early Post-Aśokan Prakrit Documents

The documents considered so far emanated from an avowedly Buddhist king (though he patronized various groups), and from an Indianized state in a Buddhist cultural environment. Post-Aśokan epigraphy in India continued for some centuries to be composed in some Prakrit (mostly western rather than eastern, reflecting the shift of political power from Magadha to western-central India) (Salomon 1998: 76–77), and recording gifts mostly favoring non-Brahmanical religious groups. At first, most of these were simple labels or dedicatory inscriptions that served mainly to name (and thereby bring blessings upon) the donor of an image or other object. The Sātavāhana kings, however, began making grants recorded in more complex documents that included a statement of stipulated privileges linked to the grant.<sup>31</sup> Donative records thereby came to serve the further, legal purposes of

29 Burrow (1937: 17) takes *anati* (rather than the expected *añati*, cf. Skt. *ājñapti*) to be a loan form.

30 *pravamṇaḡa* corresponds phonetically to Skt. *\*prapannaka* (Burrow 1937: 107), but as with Khotanese *pravanāja* “registered, set in the account” Bailey (1961: 70) “would trace the word to Skt. *prati-panna-ka* with the meaning of *prati-pad-* ‘enter in an account’...”

31 Nos. 1105, 1124, 1125, 1126, and 1195 in Lüders’ (1912) list.

recording and guaranteeing the beneficiary's special rights. The earliest such examples, recording the donation of land and villages to Buddhist monks, are inscribed in stone in cave monasteries, but the format was probably already in wider use on other media; the stone inscriptions themselves refer to documents (*paṭṭikā*) being prepared and handed over to the beneficiaries.<sup>32</sup> From the 4<sup>th</sup> century, copperplates would become the usual material for making durable copies of documents of this type.<sup>33</sup>

In this transition, certain diplomatic features pointed out so far persist. For example, even the early Prakrit land-grants of the Sātavāhanas, Pallavas, and Śālaṅkāyanas include clauses stating the authority issuing the order (the sovereign himself in the early examples) and calling for the production of a document: e.g. *aviyena āṇataṃ* ("ordered by myself") and *datā paṭṭikā* ("the document was given") in the Nasik cave inscriptions; and *āṇatī sayatti dattā paṭṭikā* ("the document has been given by my own order") in the Maidavolu plates.<sup>34</sup> By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the formula, now in Sanskrit, was made more emphatic by the mention of the king's "own mouth".<sup>35</sup>

The Nāsik inscription of Gautamīputra, year 18, for example, records a gift of fields totaling 200 *nivartanas* to some Buddhist monks

- 32 Record nos. 11, 12, 13, and 19; the last portion of no. 1195 has been lost. The support used for grant documents is specified as tablets or plates (*phalaka*) in one western Kṣatrapa grant of year 45: *phalakavāre caritrato ti* ("[This has been recorded] at the repository of tablets according to custom", Sircar 1965a: 99; 1965b: 166). The *phalaka* was probably of wood, though Aśoka's PE 7 (cited above) mentions *silāphalaka*, 'stone slabs'.
- 33 "There is clear evidence, however, that the origins of the copper plate charters or their prototypes go back farther than the 4<sup>th</sup> century, for some of the donative cave inscriptions of the Western Ksatrapa and Satavahana kings from Nasik, datable to the first or second century, are evidently copies on stone of original documents written on portable materials, possibly copper" (Salomon 1998: 114).
- 34 Maidavolu plates, ll. 27–28; cf. *sayam āṇataṃ*, "Ordered by myself" (Hirahadagalli plates, l. 49). In this same period, we also see the appearance of an official given the role of executing the order; in later Sanskrit inscriptions he is commonly designated as *ājñāpti*, but the Guṇapadeya CP of Queen Cārudevī (no. 1327 in Lüders' list) concludes with the statement: *āṇatti rohaṇ[ī]guttīṭṭi*, "The *ājñāpti* was *Rōhiṇigupta*". The Prakrit word is used in the Maidavolu grant with reference to the king himself. The Śālaṅkāyana grants include the oldest surviving copperplate grant, the Paṭaṅdigudem (Kallacheruvu) CP, set I, from the reign of Siri-Ehavalacāntamūla (Griffiths/Tournier n.d.: no. 55; cf. nos. 159–162).
- 35 E.g., *bhaṭṭ[ā]rakā[ṇā]m* *svamukhājñāptyā likhita[m i]dam*, "This was written by the command from the king's own mouth" (Omgodu plates, l. 32); *prabhos svamukhājñāptyā neminā likhitam*, "Written by Nemi by the command from the king's own mouth" (Mangalur plates of Siṃhavarman, l. 36).

for their support.<sup>36</sup> This inscription exhibits several features of what will become a standard framework of a South Asian land-grant. It begins with an introductory portion announcing the royal order, including further particulars of time or (as in this case) place, and identifying the officer responsible for seeing the order enacted. This is followed by the order itself (indented in the text below), which includes a description of the property, followed by a list of five special privileges accorded to the recipient. In this record, each of the five “exemptions” (*parihāra*) is expressed in a single word or compound; in later epigraphy, the number of such privileges grows, and they are sometimes described at more length.<sup>37</sup> Here, I represent the exemptions in bold letters:

*sidhaṃ , senāye Vejayaṃtiye vijayakhadhāvārā govadhanasa  
Benākaṭakasvāmi Gotamīputo Sirisadakaṇi ānapayati  
Govadhane amaca Viṅhupālita .*

*gāme aparakakhaḍiye ya khetam Ajakālakiyaṃ  
Usabhadatena bhūtam nivatanasatāni be 200 eta amhakheta  
nivatanasatāni be 200 imesa pavajitāna Tekirasiṇa vitarāma ,  
**etasa casa khetasa parihāra vitarāma apavesa anomasa  
alonaḥkhādaka araṭhasavinayika savaḷātapaṛihārika  
ca , etahi naṃ parihārehi pariha[re]hi , ete casa  
khetaparihā[re] ca etha nibadhāpehi , aviyaena āṇataṃ ,  
amacena Sivagutena chato , Mahāsāmiyehi uparakhito , datā  
paṭikā savachare 10 8 vāsapakhe 2 divase 1 , Tāpasena kaṭā**  
Success! From the camp of victory of the Vejayantī army Siri-Sa-  
dakaṇi [Śrī-Sātakarṇi] Gotamīputa, the lord of Benākaṭaka of  
Govadhana, orders Viṅhupālita, the officer at Govardhana:*

The Ajakālakiya field of two hundred 200 *nivartanas* in the village of Western Kakhadi, (previously) owned by Usabhadata—that our field of two hundred 200 *nivartanas*—we confer on those Tekirasi ascetics (*pavajita* = Skt. *pravrajita*); and to that field we grant immunity, (making it):

36 No. 1125 in Lüders’ (1912) list; Senart 1905–1906: 71–73 (no. 4); Mirashi 1981: 23–28 (no. 11).

37 Sircar (1966, Appendix I) collects examples of such exemptions as they appear in Sanskrit records. South Indian and Javanese grants develop distinctive exemptions of their own; for examples, see Lubin 2013: 431–433; Lubin 2015: 252–254. Griffiths and Tournier understand *araṭhasamvināyika* as “not to be controlled by the (superordinate) territory” (Griffiths/Tournier n.d.: no. 161, with literature cited in the commentary). I thank Arlo Griffiths for his suggestions on several points in this article.

- not to be entered (by royal officers);
- not to be touched (by any of them);
- not to be dug for salt;
- not to be interfered with by the district officials;
- to enjoy all kinds of immunities.

Invest it with these immunities, and take care to have this field and these immunities registered here. Verbally ordered; written down by the officer Śivaguta;<sup>38</sup> kept by the Mahāsāmiyas. The deed (*paṭṭikā*) was delivered in the 18<sup>th</sup> year, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> fortnight of the rainy season; executed by Tāpasa.<sup>39</sup>

Six years later, the same king gave the monks a further “100 *nivartanas* of our royal land on the boundary of the city” (*naḡarasīme rājakam khetam amhasatakam*), since the earlier-granted lands had not been made productive (apparently because the village attached to them was left uninhabited). The same five exemptions are conferred, with the same command that they be recorded in a document and preserved.<sup>40</sup>

These two records speak of the legal immunities simply as *khetasa parihāra*, “exemption pertaining to a field”, but two other Sātavahana inscriptions including these exemptions on lands donated to establishments of Buddhist monks refer to them as *bhikkhuhalaparihāra*, “exemptions pertaining to monks’ lands”.<sup>41</sup> Such endowed properties are called *dhama-dāna leṇa* (“*dharma*-gift cave”),<sup>42</sup> *dhama-setu leṇa* (“cave that is bridge to the *dharma*”), or *dāna-gāma* (“gift-village”).<sup>43</sup>

The early centuries of the Common Era also saw increasingly more numerous indications of Brahmins receiving property endowments like those given to the Buddhists. The surviving Sātavāhana donations

38 It is perhaps noteworthy that in this and some other Buddhist endowments, the document has been prepared by an officer (*amātya*) with a ‘Hindu’ deity for his namesake. Such names are not necessarily an infallible index of social or religious identity, but this may reflect a situation where Brahmins occupy roles involving official records and the drafting of documents even when the rulers give more patronage to non-Brahmanical groups.

39 Text as in Mirashi 1981; Senart’s (1905–1906) translation (slightly adapted).

40 No. 1126 in Lüders (1912); Senart 1905–1906: 73–75 (no. 5); Mirashi 1981: 32–35 (no. 13).

41 Karle Cave Inscription [of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi, year 18] (no. 1105 in Lüders 1912; Senart 1902–1903: 64–71 [no. 19]; Mirashi 1981: 28–31 [no. 12]) and Nasik Cave Inscription of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Puḷumāvi, yrs. 19 and 22 (no. 1124 in Lüders 1912; Senart 1905–1906: 65–71 [no. 3]; Mirashi 1981: 49–55 [no. 19]).

42 Senart 1905–1906: 73 [no. 5, l. 5].

43 Both from inscription no. 3 in Senart 1905–1906: 65.

include the Malavalli Pillar Inscription of Cuṭukulānanda Sātakarṇi, in Karnataka, which records an early “Brahmin endowment” (*bamhadejja* = Skt. *brahmadeya*) in favor of a Brahmin named Koṇḍamāna for the worship of a god Maḷapaḷi;<sup>44</sup> this grant likewise includes “all exemptions” including “no entry by officers” (*abhaṭappavesa*). Also in the south, the earliest Pallava inscriptions employ the same *parihāra* formulae, which the Maidavolu plates (ca. 305 CE) refer to as “the exemptions of all *brahmadeyas*” (*sava-bamhadeya-pa[rihā]ro*, ll. 12–13) and “with these and other rules for all *brahmadeyas*” (*etehi anehi ca sava-bamhadeya-majādāya*, ll. 16–17).<sup>45</sup> This seems to imply that for the Pallavas this was already a well-known arrangement. The Maidavolu list of specific exemptions (ll. 13–16) includes:

- not to be dug for salt (*alona[kh]ādakaṃ*)
- not to be interfered with by the district officials (*araṭhasaṃ[vi]nāyikaṃ*)
- not (required to supply) relief (?) bullocks (*aparaṃparābaliva[daṃ\*]*)<sup>46</sup>
- not to be entered by officers (*abhaṭapapesaṃ*)
- not (required to provide) food, water (?), *vināsi/vinesi*, bed, and lodgings (to officers) (*akūracolakavināsikhaṭ[ā\*]saṃvāsaṃ*)

It is in these Sātavāhana and early Pallava grants that we find the word *bhaṭa* or *bhaḍa* used for the first time in the exemption clause (and sometimes in the lists of addressees). In later centuries, this

44 Lüders 1912 (no. 1195); Rice 1902: 251–252 (no. 263). There is also the striking Naneghat inscription of Queen Nāganikā, which begins with an invocation of Brahmanical deities and continues with an account of the performance of the full range of Vedic sacrifices, complete with the lavish fees paid to the priests—gifts that included at least one village: Lüders 1912 (no. 1114); Mirashi 1981: 5–16 (no. 3, l. 10). Oskar von Hinüber, in a private communication (25 April 2016) suggested to me that *bamhadejja* here should be translated “most excellent gift” in accordance with textual usage in the Pali literature, e.g., *brahmadeyyan ti setṭhadēyyaṃ*, Buddhaghosa, *Sumāṅgalavilāsini* 246.11 on *Dīghanikāya* 87). The *Pāli-English Dictionary* (s.v.) insists that this meaning holds even when the term applies to a gift to a Brahmin. However, the context here, including the named Brahmin beneficiary, together with the telling parallel use of the word *bhikhuhala* in grants to Buddhist monks where the listing of exemptions is concerned, suggests that the epigraphical usage must in fact be considered distinct from the scriptural usage and/or Buddhist scholastic interpretation.

45 No. 1205 in Lüder’s (1912) list; Mahalingam 1988: no. 2.

46 The meaning of *paraṃparā-balivada* is not clear; my translation is based on the hypothesis that the bullocks referred to were commandeered to resupply teams drawing wagons over long distances on state business.

becomes very common in these contexts, most often in the compound *cāṭa-bhaṭa*.<sup>47</sup>

The Hirahadagalli grant (ca. 338 CE) lists eight (or nine) special exemptions,<sup>48</sup> followed by this statement alluding formulaically to a larger set of eighteen:

*evamādikehi aṭṭhārasajāti parihārehi visayavāsīhi apiṭṭivāsīhi  
cillerekakoḍuṃkavāsīhi ca pariharitavaṃ parihāpetavva*<sup>49</sup> *ca tti*

With exemptions of the eighteen kinds, including those [mentioned], residents of the district, residents of Apiṭṭi, and residents of Cillerekakoḍuṃka should exempt and cause [others] to exempt [this property].

47 On the much-debated meaning of *cāṭa*, I find the following explanation most likely to be correct: “Dr. Bühler took *cāṭa-bhaṭa* to mean ‘regular and irregular troops,’ an interpretation which has been generally adopted since by editors of copper-plate inscriptions. That this however is not the true meaning of the words seems to me certain, as up to the present in Chamba State the word *cār*, evidently a derivative of *cāṭa*, is used to indicate the head of a *pargana* who is an executive officer responsible for the apprehension of criminals, and to whose duties it belongs to collect labourers and supplies on behalf of the head of the State and, now-a-days, of European travellers also. This explains why it was granted as a special privilege to holders of land that the *cāṭa* and his servants should not be allowed to enter it” (Vogel 1904: 247). Their duties probably included revenue collection (with the right to retain a portion thereof). Ryosuke Furui suggests (in a private communication) that the terms may have referred to different things in different regions, and he prefers to understand them, in eastern records at least, as mercenaries; he cites Choudhary 1971: 116–117. Minimally, we can affirm that the terms denote some sort of low-level officers of the state, since they are not infrequently included in the list of classes of person to whom royal orders are addressed, at the end of the roster of “all the king’s men” (*aśeṣa-rāja-puruṣān*) or “dependents of the king” (*rāja-pādopajīvinah*), but preceding the list of inhabitants (likewise organized in descending order of rank) (see, e.g., the Rajibpur CP [Furui 2015, ll. 35–44]). An early mention in this context is found in the Hirahadagalli CP (even though the syntax is obscure due to unclear and perhaps miswritten characters): *anne vi ca amhapesa[ṇa] ppayutte saṃcaramtakabhadamanusāna [kaḍhaso] ...*, “and others engaged in our service, *kaḍhaso* (?) of *saṃcaramtaka-bhaṭa-manuṣas*” (it is unclear whether this denotes one, two, or three classes of person, and what their syntactical relation is to the other servants or to the words that follow). In the Old Javanese deeds, the place of *cāṭas* and *bhaṭas* in the formula is taken by an apparently diverse category called “Beneficiaries of the Royal Property” (*manilala drabya haji*), which might loosely echo the sense of *rāja-pādopajīvinah*.

48 No. 1200 in Lüders’ (1912) list; Mahalingam 1988: no. 3: *akūrayollakavinesikhattāvāsam adūhadadhigahaṇaṃ aratṭhasamvinayikaṃ alona[gu]lacchobham akaraveṭṭhiko[-]jallam apāraṃparabalivaddagahaṇaṃ atanakaṭṭhaṭṭhaṇaṃ aharitakasākapuḥaṇaṇaṃ* (ll. 31–34). The exemption from entry by *bhaṭas* (the only one from Maidavolu that is missing in this list) may have in fact been alluded to in the preceding sentence, which is not clear.

49 The engraver appears to have written *harihāpetavva* by mistake.



This instruction, addressed to villagers and officials, to “exempt and cause (others) to exempt” the property from such obligations shows a formulaic feature—the pairing of the simple verb with its causative form—that will continue to crop up in the legalese of many later documents, beginning with some Pallava Sanskrit grants. It can also be found later in documents drafted in other languages, though a sort of calquing.<sup>50</sup>

Another new element in the Maidavolu plates was the inclusion in the eschatocol of penalties for those who might violate the terms of the grant (the double-verb formula is used here as well):

*jo amhasāsanam atichitūna pīlā bādhā karejvā ... kārāpejjā vā  
tasa amho sārīra[m] sāsanaṃ karejāmo.*

He who, violating our order, shall make or cause (others) to make trouble or obstruction, on him we shall impose corporal punishment.<sup>51</sup>

This section in later grant documents comes to include not only immediate penalties to be imposed by the king but also (and often exclusively) imprecations threatening repercussions in the next life on account of the sin incurred. In Indian land-grants, this function is served by one or more admonitory stanzas, found already in the Guṇapadeya grant of Queen Cārudevī (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century), which quotes the Sanskrit stanza in an otherwise Prakrit record.<sup>52</sup>

## Land Sales Embedded in Gupta-Era and Post-Gupta Copperplates

So far we have considered early features of royal orders, and more particularly the formulaic elements of royal grants of property as religious endowments carrying special privileges relating to otherwise normal obligations to the state. It is evident, though, that other sorts of documented land-transfer were common—for instance, transfer by sale—records of which have mostly not survived. However, a few early land-sale deeds have survived by virtue of being subsumed within a land-grant deed; examples are illustrated below. In a final section, I will

50 I provide examples in Lubin 2013: 427–429.

51 Mahalingam 1988: no. 2, ll. 21–24.

52 No. 1327 in Lüders’ (1912) list; Mahalingam 1988: no. 4. Such stanzas are drawn from a larger pool collected by Sircar (1965a: 170–201).

show how much later sale deeds in Gujarati-influenced Sanskrit and in Newari, though not constituting part of a royal endowment, nevertheless continue to employ phraseological conventions and documentary structures familiar from these Gupta and immediate post-Gupta inscriptions (as well as some of the even older diplomatic features already noted).

Some unusual Gupta-era copperplate land-grants—mostly issued by local or regional councils (*adhikaraṇa*) in areas under Gupta sovereignty—are records of land sales combined with transfers of rights by gift. Most examples come from the Bengal region.<sup>53</sup> These transactions were composed probably on palm leaves or other perishable supports and then recopied onto copperplates, perhaps because they included transfer of the right to receive tax revenue that would otherwise have gone to the king. However we should expect that simple land-sale transactions with no tax implications for the king were regularly recorded at the time, even though none have survived.

An early scholar working on these copperplate documents, Radha-govinda Basak, outlined their basic form thus:

- The petition (*vijñapti*) of the applicant, in this case to purchase a parcel;
- the purpose and terms of the purchase, according to the “local customary rate”;

53 These include, from Gupta-era north Bengal (Puṇḍravardhana): the Dhanaidaha copperplate (CP) of 432 (Basak 1923–1924; Sircar 1965b: 287–288), the Kalaikuri/Sultanpur CP of 439 (Sanyal 1960; Sircar 1965b: 352–354), the Damodarpur CPs of 443, 447, 482(?), one of the same ruler as the preceding but missing its date, and 543 (Basak 1919–1920; Sircar 1965b: 291–295, 332–356), the Baigram CP of 447 (Basak 1931–1932; Sircar 1965b: 356–359), the Paharpur CP of 478 (Dikshit 1929–1930; Sircar 1965b: 359–363), the Mahati-Raktamālā CP of 478 (Griffiths 2015; this record is the first evidence of a grant by a Gupta emperor, here Budhagupta), the Nandapur CP of 488 (Majumdar 1935–1936a; Sircar 1965b: 382–384); post-Gupta records from south Bengal (Vaṅga): the Kotalipada CP (Furui 2013), the three Faridpur CPs (Pargiter 1910; Sircar 1965b: 363–372), the Kurpala CP (unpublished, but noted in Khan 2007), and the Ghugrahati CP (Bhattasali 1925–1926); and from west Bengal (Rādhā): the Jayarampur CP (Sircar 1965b: 530–531; Srinivasan 1972; Tripathy 1997: 174–179), the Mallasarul CP (Majumdar 1935–1936b; Sircar 1965b: 372–377), and the Panchrol CP (Sircar 1983: 727–730; Furui 2011). The Mastakaśvabhra CP is the sole post-Gupta example from north Bengal (Griffiths 2015). There is also an unusual reconfirmation deed issued by Vainyagupta (Furui 2016), which recopies an earlier deed and includes a long list of donated properties with their sale prices. For analysis of many details of these grants, see also Yamazaki 1982 and (for their economic implications) Wicks 1992. I am indebted to Ryosuke Furui for his valuable comments and suggestions on this section (and on the article as a whole).

- the list of relevant “government record-keepers” whose approval is needed;
- the order (*ājñapti*) sanctioning the purchase, with description of the boundaries;
- the gifting of the parcel thus purchased; and
- the formula of perpetuity and provisions for enforcement (or imprecations against violators).<sup>54</sup>

Each of these elements employs typical phrasing including specialized legal vocabulary. The royal grants, both because of the stature of the donor, and the ceremonial weight of the act, tend to be more elaborate on the matter of rights and privileges conferred by the grant.

To take an example, the grant called by its editor Faridpur copperplate A (Pargiter 1910) commences (after the customary reference to the local ruler) with the “petition” of the purchaser and its acceptance (ll. 4–10):

*viṣayamahattara*-[persons named]-*purogā prakṛtayaś ca*  
*sādhnika-Vātabhogena vijñāptāḥ:*

*icchāmy ahaṃ bhavatān sakāśā(t\*) kṣettrakhaṇḍam upakrīya*  
*brāhmaṇasya pratipādayituṃ tad arhatha matto mūlyaṃ*  
*gṛhitvā viṣaye vibhajya dātum iti*

*yataḥ etad abhyarthanam adhikṛtyasmābhir akātyer*<sup>55</sup> *bhūtīvā*  
*pustapāla-Vi[na]yāsenāvadhāraṇayā avadhṛtam*

The leading men of the district ... and the common folk were petitioned by the *sādhnika* Vātabhoga thus:

“I wish to buy a parcel of cultivated land from you and to bestow it on a Brahmin; therefore please accept the price from me, to apportion the land in the district, and to give it (to me).”

For which reason we, giving heed to this request and being in agreement, confirmed the matter with confirmation by the record-keeper Vinayasena.

The following clauses cite pricing rules governing the sale: a “current rate clause” establishing the fair price, and “copperplate deed clause” (which required the creation of the very document at hand):

54 My summary, based on Basak 1919–1920: 113–114.

55 Read: *adhikṛtyāsmābhir ekāmīye*.

*astīha viṣaye prāk-samudra-maryyādā*<sup>56</sup> *caturddainārikyakulyavāpena kṣettrāṇi vikrīyamānakāni tathāvāpakṣettra-khaṇḍalaktakalanīdr̥stimātrpravandhena tāmrapaṭṭa-dhammaṇā* *vikrayamānakā tac ca paramabhaṭṭārakapādānām am̐tra-dharmma-ṣaḍ-bhāga-lābhaḥ* (ll. 10–13)

There is here in this district the customary rule that has earlier been agreed upon (viz., *samudita*):<sup>57</sup> that agricultural fields are sold at the rate of four *dīnāras* per *kulyāvāpa*, and that the evidence of a sale is by the custom of giving a copper-plate, which custom applies immediately on seeing the counting made for the parcel of cultivated lands of such-and-such sowing area. And then, in accordance with the law here, his Highness's feet receive a sixth part [of the merit].

56 Read: *prāk-samudita-maryādā* or *prāk-samvṛtta-maryādā*. See the next note for discussion.

57 Like Lienhard on a similar Newari clause (see below), Pargiter misunderstands the word for “earlier” (*prāk*) as meaning “eastern” (“the rule established along the eastern sea”), in this case misled by the following word, *samudra*. All subsequent interpreters, to my knowledge, have followed without question this interpretation of both words. A comparison with the similar phrases in similar contexts shows that *prāk* should not be a direction-word in this context. *Samudra* is paralleled by words referring to the currency or regular practice of the *maryādā*. Spelling errors are not few in this record, and I am inclined to emend to *samudita* (“agreed upon, settled, customary”) or perhaps *samvṛtta* (“occurring”). As further support for this temporal understanding of *prāk*, I would cite similar expressions with *pūrva*: *pūrvavapravṛttam maryādām pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraiḥ kṛtam | lokyātikavākyena na tvam hantum ihārhasi* (*Viṣṇudharmottara* 1.108.8). We find also an epigraphical parallel in a Licchavi record of 643 restoring an earlier grant: *tad idam adhunā pūrva-maryyādā-sthiti-pravartanādr̥tamanobhiḥ satataṇ ca prajānām śreyase śyaiva sarvatala-grāmasahitasya dakṣiṇakoliḡrāmadraṅgasya tad eva bhuvanēśvaradevakulaṃ yatra tatrāvasthita-kṣetra-vāṣikā-grha-panyākārair yyathā-pūrva-bhujyamānā-sīmabhiḥ tribhiḥ koṅkobilvamārgahusprinduṅgrāmair ebhir agraḥāra-tvenotsr̥ṣṭaiś cāṭabhaṭṭāpraveśyaiḥ sarva-koṭṭa-maryyādā-sthitimadbhiḥ ca sahitaṃ pratimuktam iti* (Yangahiti stone inscription of Narendradeva, ll. 8–14; text as in Regmi 1983: 114–116, no. 117).

If on the other hand *samudra* were intended, it might conceivably be *sa-mudra*, “possessing a seal”, hence “officially endorsed”. For an instance of this usage, one might cite *Brhaspatismṛti* 6.24–25ab (text as in Joshi 1937: 365): *samudraṃ varṣamāsādidhanādhyakṣākṣarānvitam | jñātam mayeti likhitaṃ samdhivigraha-lekhakaiḥ || evaṃvidhaṃ rājakṛtam śāsanam tad udahrtam ||* Strauch (2002: 50) translates: “Gesiegelt, versehen mit (der Angabe) des Jahres, des Monats usw. und dem Zeichen des Aufsehers über Güter. ‘Ich habe es zur Kenntnis genommen’, (stehe am Ende). Es ist geschrieben von Schreibern, die (gleichzeitig) Minister für Friedens- und Kriegsangelegenheiten sind, — ein solches vom König angefertigtes (Dokument) heißt Schenkungsurkunde”; this is stanza 8.17 in Jolly’s (1889: 306) translation. I am not aware, however, of any other instance of a *maryādā* being confirmed by a seal, unless the seal on copperplate deeds of this type be meant.

Note the mention of a rule (*dharmā*) that such sales must be recorded in a document (which we will see in Lienhard's Newari documents as well, below). Other inscriptions refer to such customary rates in similar terms:

*asty etat-prāk-kriyamāṇaka-maryyādā*<sup>58</sup>

*caturddīnārikkyakulyavāpena kṣettrāṇi vikrīyantāni*

There is the following customary rule that has earlier been practiced: that fields are sold at the rate of four *dīnāras* per *kulyāvāpa*. (Faridpur CP B, ll. 13–14)

*āgamyamānā prāk-pravṛtti-maryyādā caturddīnā[ri]kkya-kulyāvāpena [kṣettrā]ṇi vikkrīyamānāni*

The customary previously in practice is appealed to, to wit, arable fields are being sold at the rate of four *dīnāras* per *kulyāvāpa*. (Faridpur CP C, ll. 16–17)

*astīha viṣaye prāk-pravṛttā maryyādā*

*caturddīnārikkyakulyavāpena pratikarakṣettrāṇi vikrīyamāṇakāni tathāvāpakṣettrakhaṇḍam akṛtakalanādṛṣṭimātttrapra-vandhākṣayanīvīdharmmanā vikrīyamāṇakās*

Here in this district there is the prior-practiced custom (by which) lands yielding revenue are sold at four *dīnāras* for one *kulyāvāpa*. Plots of such *vāpa* are sold by the rule of permanent endowment, based only on sight, without performing a calculation. (Kotalipada CP, ll. 14–15)<sup>59</sup>

*iha khādāpāraviṣaye (')nuvṛtta-maryyādā-sthi[ti] XX*

*nīvīdharm[ā]kṣayeṇa labhya[te]*

Here in Khādāpāra district, the customary rule that is followed is that [property] is acquired by rule of permanent endowment. (Dhanaidaha CP, ll. 7–8)<sup>60</sup>

*iha vīthyām apratikarakhilakṣetrasya*

*śāsvatkālopabhogāyākṣayanīvyā dvi-dīnārikkya-khīla-kṣetra-kulyabāpa-vikraya-maryādāyā icchemahi*

Here in this district, for the enjoyment for all time of an uncultivated field that yields no revenue, we request according

58 The engraver has written *prāk-*.

59 Furai 2013.

60 Basak 1923–1924.

to the customary rule of selling uncultivated fields at a rate of two *dīnāras* per *kulyāvāpa*, by way of a permanent endowment. (Sultanpur CP, ll. 12–13)<sup>61</sup>

Further parallels are provided by the *Lekhapaddhati*'s examples of royal *śāsana* and charter deed (*pattalā*), where established norms—such as endowments currently being enjoyed (*palamāna* < Guj. *paḷavuṃ*) and taxes being raised—are to be continued *pūrvarītyā* or *pūrvarūḍhyā* (“by earlier custom”; see below).<sup>62</sup> There is also Viṣṇuṣeṇa's endorsement of [*pū*]rvvalamānakācārāḥ (“norms already current/being enjoyed”).<sup>63</sup>

The next section (the “transaction clause”) describes the completion of the transaction: The purchaser, having accepted the arrangement, hands over the purchase price with an oath, upon which the parcel is duly measured off (*apaviñcyā*).<sup>64</sup> Finally, the seller affirms (in the first person) that the property was sold in the presence of the purchaser “by the law of the copperplate” (*[a]smābhi[r] ... tāṃmrapaṭṭadhammaṇā vikkrīta[m]*), Faridpur CP A, ll. 16–17).

The “perpetuity clause”, which here ends in *pratipāditaṃ* (“handed over”), affirms that the property has been transferred with the customary pouring of water (*udaka-pūrvveṇa*), and that it “may be enjoyed [i.e., owned] as long as the moon, stars, and sun endure,” an expanded form of older versions.

The “protection clause”, here ending in *pratipālanīyam iti* (“it is to be protected”), puts other rulers (some other charters specify future rulers) under the obligation to uphold the terms of the “above-inscribed” (*uparilikhita*) grant, quoting a maxim to this effect. The boundaries of the property in the four directions are stated here (in some grants, at an earlier point). And the inscription closes with an “admonitory stanza” on land-grants.

61 Otherwise known as the Kalaikuri copperplate of Kumāragupta I (Sanyal 1955–1956).

62 *Lekhapaddhati* 2.2 and 2.3 as translated and discussed in Strauch 2002: 116–124 and 244–269, esp. 264, where Strauch notes parallels with Caulukya inscriptions.

63 The “Charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa” (592 CE), discussed and translated in Lubin 2015: 238. The word *valamāna* may be a form of the verb *val-* that is analogous to Guj. *vaḷavuṃ* (“empfangen werden, erhalten werden”; Strauch 2002: 477), or it might be an alternate orthography for *palamāna* < Guj. *paḷavuṃ* (“bewahrt werden, ernährt werden”) found in the *Lekhapaddhati* (and two 13<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions noted by Strauch 2002: 264).

64 Pargiter translates the verb *apavicyā* as “having severed”.

Although most of the surviving deeds of this particular type are from Bengal, many of their features appear elsewhere. The Nepalese Licchavi Yangahiti stone inscription of 643 CE, which upholds the spirit of the perpetuity clause by reinstating an earlier endowment, begins with the standard introduction of a royal order, followed by the order itself. It includes references to the customary law governing endowments, and augments the perpetuity and exemption clauses with a clause specifying that the owner may have free use and benefit of all that is comprised within the boundaries of the granted property (the “included-amenities clause”):

*oṃ svasti ... śrī-narendradevaḥ kuśalī bhaviṣyato nepālarājān  
samyak-pratimānyānudarśayati:*

*viditam astu bhavatām yathā dakṣiṇakolī-  
grāma-draṅgasya sarva-tala-grāmaiḥ sahitasya  
pūrvarājabhir māneśvare [bhu]vaneśvara-  
devakulaṃ yathākalpitāgrahārādipratyāyaṃ  
pālanopabhogāya **prati[pā]ditam** . kenāpi ca  
hetunā śrī-bhūmaguptenākṣiptaṃ rājakula-bhogyam  
abhūt; **tad idam adhunā pūrva-maryyādā-sthiti-**  
**pravartanādṛtamanobhiḥ satatañ ca prajānāṃ śreyase**  
**śyaiva sarva-tala-grāma-sahitasya dakṣiṇakolī-grāma-**  
**draṅgasya tad eva bhuvaneśvara-devakulaṃ yatra**  
**tatrāvasthita-kṣetra-vāṭikā-grha-panyākārair yyathā-**  
**pūrva-bhujyamāna-sīmabhis** tribhiḥ koṅko-bilvamārga-  
husprindū-grāmair ebhir agrahāratvenotsṛṣṭaiś **cāta-**  
**bhaṭāpraveśyaiḥ sarva-koṭṭa-maryyādā-sthitimadbhiś**  
**ca sahitaṃ pratimuktam iti ...***

Śrī Narendradeva, in good health, honoring the future kings of Nepal, instructs them:

**Let it be known to you that** the kings in the past endowed the temple of Bhuvaneśvara in Māneśvara with the *draṅga* of Dakṣiṇakolī village, along with all the villages in/and lowlands (*sarva-tala-grāmaiḥ*),<sup>65</sup> with revenue like that devised for an *agrahāra*, for their protection and enjoyment. But for some reason, this was withdrawn by Śrī Bhaumagupta and came into the possession to the royal court. **So now with**

65 Cf. *sarva-tala-sahitasya* in the Luṅjhya inscription of the same year (Regmi 1983: no. 116). It has also been suggested that a *tala* was an administrative unit within a *draṅga*, comprising a group of villages (Sharma 1983: 48–50).

zealous thoughts of promoting the earlier customary rule, and for the continuous benefit of our subjects, we have relinquished the temple of Bhuvaneśvara in the *draṅga* of Da-kṣiṇakoḷī village along with all the villages in/and lowlands, together with three villages of Koṅko, Bilvamārga, and Hus-prinduṅ villages, **including the fields, gardens, houses, and shops (? paṇyākāra)**<sup>66</sup> **wherever they be located within the boundaries as previously enjoyed**—these being presented in the same way as an *agrahāra*, not to be **entered by cāṭas and bhaṭas, and endowed with all the customary laws of forts.**<sup>67</sup> ... (ll. 1, 6–14)

Another, later example from the western Himalayan region of Chambā, a copperplate grant issued by Somavarman in 1067, likewise combines the perpetuity clause and the amenities clause:

... *evaṃ sva-sīmā-triṇa-goyūthī-gocara-paryantaṃ sa-khilopakhilam sa-vanaspaty-udakam sa-nirgama-praveśam ārāma-viśrāma-sahitam ācandrārkaṃ ... ācandrārkaṃ putrapautrayor bhoktavyaṃ* |

... including the grass, grazing, and pasture-ground up to its own boundaries, with fallow-land, large and small, with trees and water, with egress and ingress, together with groves and gardens, for as long as the moon and the sun ... To be enjoyed henceforward for as long as the moon and the sun by sons and grandsons. (ll. 21–24)<sup>68</sup>

Notice here that the perpetuity of a right being hereby conferred is expressed using an idiom—*ācandrārkaṃ putrapautrayor*—that is virtually identical to the one used by Aśoka in PE 7 and in the Sanchi Edict (see above, p. 43; only the order of the compounds is inverted).

66 *paṇyāgāra* in *Arthaśāstra* 7.15.20 is a form of tribute payment between kings.

67 Yangahiti stone inscription of Narendradeva (*saṃvat* 67 = 643 CE); text as in Regmi 1983: 114–116 (no. 117). The attribute *sarvakotṭamaryādāsthīmat* (seen also in the Changu Narayana temple inscription [ibid.: no. 53] and the Dharampur inscription [ibid.: no. 62] of 520 = 598 CE; cf. the Thānkot Ādi-Nārāyaṇa temple inscription of 428 = 506 CE [ibid.: no. 20]), always together with the *acāṭabhaṭapraveśya* provision, may confer the privilege of a degree of autonomy otherwise allowed only to fortresses (*kotṭa*).

68 Vogel 1904: 257–258.



Besides such phraseological conventions in use in these documents, certain structural conventions can be noted as well. One of these is the use of framing or nesting, for instance to embed direct discourse. In its simplest form, this can be seen even in Aśoka's edicts and in the Niya documents (as noted in the first sections). The content of an order or instruction may begin with a relative adverb (*yathā*, *yataḥ*, *yat*) and/or may end in *iti*. Major sections commonly close with a verb or participle that expresses the main thrust of the section. Some of this can be perceived in the examples already cited (where I have employed indentation to show the structures), but Arlo Griffiths has recently analyzed one particularly complex example in his edition of the Mahatī-Raktamālā CP of 159 CE, which includes an account of a property dispute. He outlines the text's "narrative structure" (Griffiths 2015: 25) by which, in a long series of nested direct discourses, the princely officer and the district council inform (*bodhayanti*) the householders of a certain village of the petition made (*vijñāpayati*) by an Brahmin who was being deprived of a previously granted property, the petition in turn quoting communications between himself, the provincial administrator, and a regional governor, resulting in an order to purchase a new property, and to gift it to the Brahmin, in exchange for the one taken away. Each level of the nested discourse closes with a verb or participle expressing the information conveyed or the order enacted. For all its complexity, however, this inscription differs from other similar copperplate grants only in the depth of the embedding employed.

## Land-Sale Deeds from Nepal

Kölver and Śākya (1985) have published a collection of land sale and mortgage documents composed in a mixture of Sanskrit and Newari, dating from the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lienhard (1988) added another large group of sale deeds from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Although Lienhard says that "we know of no document of this kind from either India or areas influenced by Indian culture" (*ibid.*: xiv), in fact several examples exist. The chief structural elements of these documents are these (analyzed in more detail by Kölver and Śākya [1985: 31–51]):

- invocation
- date
- purchaser (*grāhaka*): ... *sakāśāt* "in front of ..."

- seller (*dhāraṇaka*): ... *nāmnā* “by name” or name in the instrumental case + *svakīyaṃ svabhujyamānikam*
- description of the property: location, size, boundaries, including a “rights-and-amenities clause”: e.g., *E-pāścimataḥ*, *S-uttarataḥ*, *W-pūrvataḥ*, *N-dakṣiṇataḥ*, *etan-madhye*, [name, etc.] *tat-grha-mārga-dhārā-pūrva-sva-sīmā-paribhogam* “with beneficial use of the house,<sup>69</sup> paths, and channels heretofore belonging (*sva*) within these boundaries (*sīmā*)”
- the “current-rate clause” and the “transaction clause”: e.g., *tad yathā-deśa-kāla-pravartamānas tathā saṃcārārgeṇa suvarṇamūlyam ādāya*, *kṛaya-vikṛaya-svādhinena kṛayena vikṛtaṃ bhavati* “having accepted a ‘garland of gold’ as the price offered, at the customary rate current in that place at that time, (the property) is sold by independent purchase (according to the rules) of purchase and sale.”
- the “liability clause”, a variant of the “protection clause”: *yady ... tadā dhāraṇakena [svayaṃ] parisodhanīyam* “If ... then the seller should rectify it [himself].”
- the names of witnesses and the scribe (with allusion to the document itself): *atra patrārthe dṛṣṭa-śruta-sākṣī ...* “As witness to what was seen and heard here, for the sake of documentation ...”
- [from the 16<sup>th</sup> cent.: a “receipt clause” indicating that the price was paid in full, and sometimes other stipulations]

The earliest example of such a sale deed, as edited and translated by Kölver and Śākya is dated NS 159 (1038 CE):

*[siddham] samvat 100 50 9 māgha śukla divā tṛtīyāyāṃ*  
 | *śrī sātīgvalake janārddanaguptabhallowena svakīyaṃ*  
***svabhujyamānakam*** | *tatraiva nivāsino vijayasim[ha]pākasya*  
***sakāśāt*** | *vo[ndu]nāmapradeśe | vidyādhara-guptabhallowkīya-*  
*bhūmer pūrvataḥ | gajādhara-guptabhallowkīyabhūmer uttarataḥ |*  
*candrākaraguptabhallowkīyakṣetrasya pāścimataḥ | lakṣmīdhara-*  
*guptabhallowkasya bhūmer ddakṣiṇataḥ | etatmadhye*  
***kṣetrāṅkato rova 3 tasya mūlapiṇḍa*** *śrīyaṃgvalamahāvihāra-*  
*vastu deya taṃ mā 1 tatkarṣakalābhamātraṃ mūlyaṃ grhītvā*  
***anivarttakanyāyena vikṛtaṃ*** [|] ***atrārthe sākṣī*** | *hankhātollake*  
*vaidya trivikramaśīlaḥ paraṃ pramāṇam iti |*

<sup>69</sup> The meaning of *paribhoga* here is clarified by comparison with its use in the sale and mortgage deeds analyzed by Kölver/Śākya (1985: e.g., 38, 44–45, and *passim*): “usufruct, right of beneficial use”, as a legally transferable right.

Hail! The year 159, on the third day of the bright half of Māgha. [Vendor] **By Janārdanagupta Bhalloka, in Sātīgvalaka, his own property, which is enjoyed by himself, in front of Vijayasimha Pāka, resident in this very place, in the region called Vondul, east of the land of those that belong to Vidyādhara-gupta Bhalloka, north of the land of those that belong to Gajādhara-gupta Bhalloka, west of the field of those that belong to Candrā-karagupta Bhalloka, south of the land of Lakṣmīdhara-gupta Bhalloka: in their midst, a field amounting to 3 rovas**—its basic subsistence tax to be given as the property of the Venerable Grand Monastery of Yaṃgvala, viz., 1 *mā(nikā)* of rice—the gains of its cultivation merely have been **sold by irreversible rule, the price having been received. Witness in this matter:** The Vaidya Trivikramaśīla, of Ha[nkhā] Tol, is chief authority. (Kölver/Śākya 1985: 103–104)

In this case, it is the rights to tax revenue (*mūlapinḍa*) from the property that are sold. In other sales (e.g., *ibid.*: nos. 9 and 10, NS 262 and 273), the purchaser acquires full rights to the land and its produce:

*tata kṣetraṃ karṣaka-paribhogyanīyaṃ krayavikraya-svādhīnatvena anivarttakanyāyena krayena vikrītam bhavati*  
this field, its cultivation to be fully enjoyed, is sold by (a party)  
under its own jurisdiction as to purchases and sales, through an act  
of buying by irreversible rule. (Kölver/Śākya 1985: 115–119)<sup>70</sup>

Lienhard (1988: no. 217) provides a sample translation of a later and slightly different sort of sale (I have put the formulaic elements in bold, and modified or added those parts of the translation that are in italics):

*siddhaṃ. svasti. śrīśrīsumatījayajitāmitramalladebaprabhu-thākulaśana* **praśādālapā.** *gṛhamāṃdalasmīna mārggeṇa paścimataḥ, śrīcand(r)aśeṣ(a)rakasya gṛheṇa uttarataḥ, rāmacandrakasya gṛheṇa pūrvvataḥ, mārggeṇa dakṣīnataś ca. etanmadhye* *bāderājakulache khe khāmīna niyahnaśa ku 27, kātha jimacha ku 11, khe khāmīna khu ku*

<sup>70</sup> In no. 10, they instead translate the last part “through a purchase by the Rule of Continuation”.

6, *kātha hṇasa ku 7 rakacā. tata*<sup>71</sup> *gr̥ha-mārgga-dhārā-pūrvva-svasimā-parībhogaṃ. tata yathādeśakālaprava(r)ttamānas tathāsaṃcār̥gheṇa suvarṇṇapūṣpamār̥gha praḍhokitam ādāya krayavikrayasvādhinena*<sup>72</sup> *krayena vikriyatam bhavati. śrīkḥapvaṃbhūmyām śrīcāṇḍigalasthāne tavacapālatolagr̥hādhivāsi viśvarāma devarāma nehmaṃ phukija nāmna prasādīkṛtam. atra patrārthe dr̥ṣṭasākṣī mātā śrīśrīpadmāvātidevi bhāgīrāma bhāro. likhiti kāyastha tulaśīrāma. samvat 805 vaiśākhābadi 4. śubhaṃ.*

Siddham! (Let this be) auspicious! The eminent and wise King Jayajitāmitra Malla is pleased to grant (*prasādālapā*) the sale of the house belonging to the royal family called Bāde: In the “circle of surrounding houses”, (it is) located to the west of the main road, to the north of the house belonging to śrī-Candraśekhara, to the east of the house belonging to Rāmacandra and to the south of the main road; **in between these** is the house belonging to the royal family called Bāde, 27 cubits in length, 11 cubits in breadth (with an) annex measuring 6 cubits in length and 7 cubits in breadth, (*including*) **beneficial use of the house, paths, and springs heretofore belonging (sva) within these boundaries (sīmā).**<sup>73</sup> (*The seller*) having accepted a “garland of golden flowers” as the price offered, at the customary rate current in that place at that time, (*the property*) is sold by independent purchase (according to the rules) of purchase and sale.<sup>74</sup> (He) is pleased (to declare the house legally sold) to the two brothers Viśvarāma and Devarāma, who both live in Tavacapālatola in śrī-Cāṇḍigala in Khopabhūmi (i.e., Bhaktapur). **The eye-witnesses to this document** are (the King’s) mother Padmāvātidevī and Bhagīrāma Bhāro. The scribe Tulasīrāma writes. (In the

71 This word occurs once as *tataḥ* (no. 242). Lienhard sometimes indicates that the *-a* is superfluous, or corrects the word (twice) to read *tatra* (though *atra* is commonly found elsewhere in the documents with no such confusion).

72 In the original, this compound begins with an extra *kraya* and ends with *m*, both superfluous.

73 This phrase occurs also in nos. 223, 249, 252, etc. Lienhard translates: “(The sale entitles) the owner to use the passage bordering to the east of the waterspout”. But this cannot be correct, not least because *pūrvva* cannot refer to a particularity of the situation of this one plot—it is a regular part of the formula.

74 The force of *svādhīna* is probably to indicate the seller’s right freely to alienate the property at will. Lienhard’s “more or less free translation” (1988: xiv) seems to ignore this compound: “(The right lying at the heart of the agreement) is sold after gold in the form of a flower wreath has been accepted (by the king) at a rate (or price) appropriate to the time and the region.”

year) NS 805, in the Month of Vaiśākha, on the fourth day of the dark fortnight. (Let this be) auspicious. (adapted from Lienhard 1988: xiv)

In this case, the seller in fact appears to be the king, for which reason we find the use of the denominative verb built on the word *prasāda*, which is ubiquitous in royal grants for expressing the king's "act of showing favor" or "being pleased to grant" (both New. *prasādālapā* and Skt. *prasādīkṛta* are used in this record).

But most of the other sale documents in this collection, like Kölver and Śākyaś, involve private parties. A dozen of the property sales include, just after the description of the boundaries, a clause stipulating some of the amenities included in the purchase; the usual form is:<sup>75</sup>

*tata gṛha-mārgga-dhārā-pūrvva-sva-sīmā-paribhogam*

[This includes] the right to use of its house, paths, and water-sources heretofore contained within its own bounds.

Where the property is a building site (*pātālabhuṃ*) with or without an existing house, we find these variants:

*tasya pātāla-mārgga-dhāra pūrvva-sva-sīmā-paribhogam* (Lienhard 1988: no. 231)

*tata gṛha-pāthālabhuṃ-pūrvva-sīmā-paribhogam* (ibid.: no. 234)

*tata gṛha-pātālabhuṃ-(v)āṭikā-pūrvva-so-sīmā-paribhogam* (ibid.: no. 237)

This clause, which Lienhard misunderstands, may be compared with an amenities clause found in north Indian land-grant copperplates since at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century:

*sva-sīmā-trṇa-yūti-gocara-paryantaḥ*<sup>76</sup> (*vel sim.*)

including the grass and pasture within its own bounds

75 With the variations noted below, *tat...pūrvva-svasīmā-paribhogam* occurs in Lienhard 1988: nos. 217, 226, 227, 229, 231, 233, 234, 237, 238, 244, 249, and 252.

76 Mungir CP of Devapāla, mid-9th c. (Barnett 1925–26), ll. 38–39; Bhojadeva's Banswara CP of 1020 CE (Hultzsck 1911–1912: 182, l. 16), and Bhoja's Ujjain CP of 1021 CE (Kirtane 1877: 54 [No. II, l. 15]).

The next clause stipulates that the price should conform to the customary rate according to the current, local practice:<sup>77</sup>

*tata [kṣetra]<sup>78</sup> yathā-deśa-kāla-pravaritamānas tathā-saṃcārārghena suvarṇṇapūṣpamālārgha(ṃ)/-eṇa<sup>79</sup> praḍhaukitam ādāya kraya-vikraya-svādhīnena krayena vikrītaṃ/vikrīyataṃ bhavati.*

Then, [the seller] having accepted a “garland of gold” as the price offered, at the customary rate current in that place at that time, [the property] is sold by independent purchase (according to the rules) of purchase and sale.

An optional clause provides a guarantee that the buyer’s property rights are upheld and that no others, such as an officer of the state or a religious entity, lays claim to them:

*yady asyām daivika-rājika-vyāghāta parena tadā dhārṇṇakena svayaṃ parisodhanīyam*

If within this [boundary (scil. sīmā?)] someone else should bring some interference by a temple or the state, then the seller himself should clear it up.

In the case of a royal grant it is the king who offers that assurance.

The final section of the property sale deed registers the attestations of witnesses to the transaction, as well that of the person who wrote out the document itself. Again, the language for this is legal boilerplate found, with only minor differences, in the copperplate inscriptions considered earlier.

77 It is further worth noting that we have epigraphical precedent of a rarer type, a royal charter endorsing the market regulations of a merchant community, known as the Charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa. This inscription specifies that prices should follow market norms, and prescribes penalties for “deceptive pricing” (*argha-vāñcana*). See Lubin 2015 for a full translation and discussion. The degree to which exchanges were regulated by guilds or other customary norms suggests a highly regulated market.

78 This word (“field”) is included only in nos. 224, 225, 232, 242, and 247 (sometimes showing *kṣatra*) of Lienhard’s corpus, which concern the sale of a plot of land with no house on it.

79 Or: *suvarṇṇamūlyam* “price in gold” (e.g., nos. 224, 225, 231).

## Documents from the *Lekhapaddhati*

The *Lekhapaddhati*, a formulary compiled ca. 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> c. in Gujarati-influenced Sanskrit, includes land-transfer documents, including a sale-deed, a deed of gift, and a royal endowment. One version of the sale-deed reads thus:

2.34.1 *vikraya-caṁdrakālika-patram yathā* ||  
*saṁvat 1288 varṣe vaiśākha-śu-di 15 some 'dyeha śrīmad-*  
*aṇahillapāṭake samasta-rājāvalī-samalamkṛta-pūrvam adyeha*  
*bālūa-grāme **caṁdrakālika-vikraya-patram** abhiliḅhyate yathā* ||  
*dhaniko nāma nāmataḥ | ihaiva-vāstavya-vya°-khetākhaḥ sva-*  
*dhanam prayumkte | asya ca hastād dhāraṇiko nāma nāmataḥ |*  
*ihaiva-vāstavya-brāhmaṇa-amukākena pūrvā-puruṣopārjītam*  
*dvibhūmikyam kaveluka-cchannam samāliṅdakam*  
*pūrvābhimukham sa-phalahikam **sva-sīmā-maryādam sa-***  
***vṛkṣa-mālākulam nava-nidhāna-sahitam** nava-navaty-ācāreṇa*  
*vya°-khetā-pārśve **caṁdrakālikam** śāka-phalaka-nyāyena*  
*vikrītam | gṛha-mūlye dra° 500 pañcaśatāni (|) ata ūrdhvam*  
*gṛham idam vyavahārakena **putra-pautra-paramparayā***  
***bhoktavyam** | vikretavyam ca || yad rocate tat kartavyam |*  
*brāhmaṇa-amukākena gṛha-sanmukham nāvalokanīyam ||*  
*gṛhasyāghātā yathā || **asya vidheḥ pālanāya rāṇaka-gotrika-***  
***anya-vyavahārakādi-khaścā-rakṣaṇāya** datta-pratibhūḥ*  
*brāhmaṇa-amukākah | tathā dvitīya-pratibhūḥ amukākah ||*  
*atra matāni atra sākṣiṇah || ubhayābhyarthita-pāri-amukākena*  
*likhitaṁ pramāṇam iti ||*

2.34.1 Eine Urkunde über einen dauerhaften Verkauf:

(E[inleitung]) Heute, am Montag, dem 15. Tag der hellen (Hälfte) des (Monats) Vaiśākha im Jahre Saṁvat 1288, hier in der herrlichen (Stadt) Aṇahillapāṭaka, zuerst die vollständige königliche Genealogie, hier und heute im Dorf Bālūa wird folgende **Urkunde über einen dauerhaften Verkauf** geschrieben:

(H[auptteil]) Der Käufer, namentlich: Der hier wohnende *vya(vahārin)* Khetāka investiert sein Eigentum. Aus dessen Hand (nimmt) der Verkäufer, namentlich: Der hier wohnende Brahmane N.N. hat dem *vya(vahārin)* Khetā(ka) entsprechend der 99-(Jahre)-Regel, für unbegrenzte Zeit, entsprechend der Regel für (den Handel) mit Obst und Gemüse (ein) von früheren Generationen ererbtes, zweistöckiges, mit Ziegeln gedecktes,

mit einer Terrasse versehenes, nach Osten ausgerichtetes, einen Innenhof(?) besitzendes (Haus) verkauft, **mit seinen Grenzen, einschließlich der baumbestandenen Waldstücke und neu (entdeckter) Schätze**. Als Preis für dieses Haus (sind) 500, (in Worten:) fünfhundert, *dr[ammas]* (gezahlt worden). **Von nun an soll der Käufer dieses Haus in Erbfolge nutzen**. Und er kann es verkaufen. Was ihm gefällt, kann er machen. Der Brahmane N.N. (d.i. der Verkäufer) soll keine Schwierigkeiten in bezug auf das Haus machen. Die Grenzen des Hauses (sind) wie folgt. **Für die Einhaltung dieser Regel, für den Schutz vor Beeinträchtigungen durch *rāṇakas*, (andere) Gotra-Angehörige (*gotrika*) und andere Gläubiger usw. ist der Brahmane N.N. als Bürge gestellt. Und der zweite Bürge (ist) N.N.** (S[chluss]teil) Hier die Unterschriften. Hier die Zeugen. (Die Urkunde) wurde auf Bitte beider (Parteien) von *pāri* N.N. geschrieben. (Sie ist) Autorität. (Strauch 2002: 175, 381)

Besides some other evidently formulaic clauses not seen earlier we find several familiar ones:<sup>80</sup>

- *sva-sīmā-maryādaṃ*: “encompassing its own boundaries”
- *sa-vṛkṣa-mālākulaṃ*: “including trees and groves”
- *nava-nidhāna-sahitam*: “including any newly (discovered) treasure”
- *candrakālikam*: “for as long as the moon”
- *putra-pautra-paramparayā bhoktavyaṃ*: “to be enjoyed by the succession of one’s sons and grandsons”—this version adds, “and sellable (by them as well)”
- *asya vidheḥ pālanāya rāṇaka-gotrika-anya-vyavaharakādi-khaścā-rakṣanāya*<sup>81</sup> ... *pratibhūḥ*: “as guarantors ... to protect this rule, and guard against infringement of it by rulers, *gotra*-fellows (of the seller), or other parties”.<sup>82</sup>

Some of these also appear in a model sale deed (*vikraya-bhūrja*) in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century *Lokaprakāśa*, from Mithila:

80 These formulae are discussed in detail by Strauch (2002: 262–266).

81 *khaścā* is used where inscriptions normally use a word like *bādā*.

82 The *Lekhapaddhati* uses *vyavahāraka* in three distinct senses: for creditor, purchaser, and merchant (Strauch 2002: 480–481). In this position, it is hard to know which is meant, but the implication seems to be someone who might assert some (spurious) commercial or financial claim on the property.



*eṣāṃ dīnārānāṃ mayāmukasya mahattasya  
samantānasya*<sup>83</sup> *putrapautrasahitasya vikrīritam |*  
*ācandrasūryasamudraparyantaṃ tāvat upabhuñjīyam | atra*  
*gotrajo vānyo vā dauhitro vā pautro vā | yadi kenāpi śācā*<sup>84</sup> *kṛtā,*  
*tadā mayāpy atāraṇīyam*<sup>85</sup>

For these *dīnāras*, I have sold it to the reverend So-and-so, with his offspring, along with his sons and grandsons; it is to be enjoyed/possessed as long as the moon, sun, and sea. In this, a go-tra-fellow or some, whether my daughter's child or my son's—if any (of them) makes any infringement, then I myself shall remove it. (Zadoo 1947: 39–41)

Most of the same formulae also appear in some form in the *Lekha-paddhati*'s sample royal endowment (*śāsana*), e.g., in 2.2.3:

... *rāṇaka-śrī-amuka-devena paramayā bhaktyā*  
*paramalokahitāya amuka-grāmaḥ svasīmā-paryantaḥ*  
*savr̥kṣamālākulo nava-nīdhāna-sahitaḥ pūrvarītyā palamāna-*  
*devadāya-brahmadāya-gavāṃgocara-varjaṃ pānīya-praveśa-*  
*nihsāra-saṃyukāḥ sva-sīmāyāṃ pūrvasyāṃ ca amuka-amuka-*  
*grāma-sīmāyāṃ sīmā-maryādā (|) evaṃ caturādhātopalakṣitaś*  
... *śāsane pradattaḥ*

King So-and-so-deva has given in an endowment deed (*śāsane*) Such-and-Such village, **up to its own boundaries, with trees and groves,**<sup>86</sup> **including new-found treasure**, excluding gifts to gods or Brahmins and pastures that are being protected **by earlier custom, (but) including water(-ways), ingress, and egress**, and with its four boundaries indicated thus: “the boundary limit (is located) **at the property's own former boundary** and that of such-and-such (neighboring) villages”.

[ ... hat der *rāṇaka Śrī N.N.-deva* ... mit außerordentlicher Hingabe, für (sein) Wohl in der jenseitigen Welt das Dorf N.N. (übergeben), innerhalb seiner Grenzen, mit (seinen) baumbestandenen Waldstücken, mit neu (gefundenen) Schätzen, (jedoch) ohne Weideland für Kühe und Gaben an Götter und Brahmanen, die sich entsprechend früherem Brauch (bereits) in

83 Read *sasantānasya*.

84 Read *śāścā* (for *khaścā*).

85 Read *atāraṇīyam*?

86 On *savr̥kṣamālākulam*, see the discussion by Strauch (2002: 263).

Besitz befinden, und versehen mit Wasser, Eingang und Ausgang (?). **Und an seiner östlichen Grenze die Grenzen und Flurgrenzen (*maryādā*) an der Grenze der Dörfer N.N. und N.N. (?)** So in seinen vier Grenzen bezeichnet, ist dieses Dorf ... in (Form dieser) Schenkungsurkunde gegeben ... (Strauch 2002: 249–250 and 264, citing other epigraphical parallels)]

Strauch has inserted unwanted punctuation (cutting off the subject of the admittedly very long sentence from its verb; he then finds the underlined phrase corrupt and translates it only in a footnote. He too takes the word *pūrva* in a directional sense, since one might expect a description of the boundaries on all sides. However, in light of the above parallels, I suggest rather to understand it as summarily reaffirming the previous boundaries relative to neighboring properties. Moreover, it should be construed as direct discourse bracketed by the following *evaṃ*: “with its four boundaries indicated thus: ‘the boundary limit (is located) at the property’s own former boundary and that of such-and-such (neighboring) villages’”.

As in the Newari deeds, this passage stipulates rights pertaining to water sources, and means of ingress and egress. Like other copper-plates, other natural resources are included, although in this case pasturage is excluded, perhaps by the law of the commons. The endowment deed ends with a guarantee formula that makes use of the phrase *putra-pautra* as well (in this case referring to his own offspring and their responsibility to maintain the endowment):

*grāmo (')yaṃ mamānvayenāpareṇa vā dhārmikena bhūtīvā **sva-putra-pautra-paramparayā pālanīyaḥ***

This village should be protected by my descendents or by any other [ruler] who is righteous, [and] **by the succession of their sons and grandsons.**<sup>87</sup>

Other manuscripts also include the phrase (*sa-*)*kāṣṭha-trṇodakopetaṃ* (“including any wood, grass, and water that is there”).<sup>88</sup>

87 Strauch (2002: 116, 245): “Dieses Dorf ist von meinem Geschlecht oder von einem anderen rechtmäßigen (Herrscher) und dessen Söhnen und Enkeln zu schützen.”

88 Strauch’s (2002) manuscripts B (= A in Prasad 2007) and Bar1. Bar1 also includes any crops already being in place: *evaṃ niṣpadyamāna-godhūma-vrīhi-caṇaka-kaṃgu-trṇādi-caturāghāṭa-pālita-sva-sīmā-paryantaṃ savrṅṣamālākulaṃ sarva-*

Several of these formulae appear also in the documents that the compiler of the *Lekhapaddhati* calls (*prasāda-*)*pattalā* (“deed of favor”, 2.3) and *grāma-paṭṭaka* (“village [tax-assessment] plate”, 2.5). For example, in “deeds of favor” (2.3.5, 7), the ruler promises to restore or compensate for any property stolen from residents or travelers “within its bounds” (*sva-sīmā-madhye*); in tax-assessment plates (2.5.1, 2, and similarly 4), security is promised on the highway, again *sva-sīmā-madhye*. Tax is to be paid on the village including everything “up to its own boundaries” (*sva-sīmā-paryamṭasya*, 2.5.5), but the tax-assessments also specifically exclude properties already granted special status and “being enjoyed by earlier custom” (*pūrva-rūḍhyā palamāna, pūrva-rītyā paripālānīya*), which include *devadāya, brahma-dāya, gavāṃgocara, sthitimukti*, and *rājaprasāda*.

## Concluding Reflections

My aim here was not to attempt a comprehensive survey of formulaary protocol in the South Asian cultural sphere but simply to demonstrate that such a thing exists, that it was built up progressively out of quite ancient features, and that some of the earliest attested features continued to be employed in one form or another (even including calques in various languages, as illustrated in the appendix below). Certain elements of these can be found in use even in late-medieval times. This phenomenon may be compared with the role of structural elements and phrases from Roman law and medieval French law that survive in modern Anglo-American legal and administrative documents to the present day.

The paucity of document-types that were committed to writing on material supports durable enough to survive the ravages of time and climate naturally limits the range of formats and features illustrated. Royal orders, especially those pertaining to endowments and other land transactions, are the most numerous, and later endowments deeds from other donors show several similar features. And although the early real-property grants that included *parihāra*-type exemptions were made to non-Brahmanical religious groups, very similar formulae

*nīdhāna-sahitaṃ ... kāṣṭha-trṇodakopetaṃ ... etat sāsanaṃ dattaṃ* (“This endowment is given ... along with cultivated wheat, rice, chickpea, millet, grasses, etc., protected by the four boundaries, up to its own boundaries, with any trees and groves, including any treasure, ... (and) including any wood, grass, and water that is there”).

were used when such grants came to be issued to Brahmin householders (*brahmadēya*) and to Brahmin-staffed temples (*devadāna*).<sup>89</sup> Even when we turn to surviving land deeds unconnected with a religious endowment, striking continuities with the older-attested diplomatic conventions can be seen. The ordering of certain structural elements of Indian documents did vary by region, period, and purpose, but a number of those elements, as well as a good deal of phraseology, survived translation not just between Prakrit and Sanskrit, but across whole language families (e.g., Tamil, Javanese, Newari), and the supplanting of particular terms by synonyms borrowed from other languages (and legal systems).

The very existence of a distinctive set of diplomatic norms disseminated through so much of South Asia (and beyond) raises further questions. What were the circumstances that favored the spread and acceptance of these norms in diverse contexts? Who formulated, executed, and promoted the use of such documents? What sort of political, administrative, or other institutions required them or created a demand for them? As always in the study of ancient and medieval South Asia, our resources for answering such questions are mostly limited to the very same sources that posed them, but the present study ought at least to show that a comparative reading of documents disparate in both time and space can reveal things that specialized studies of individual genres and corpora may not. Minimally, though, we must hypothesize that the linking factor was likely the early emergence of a professional class of scribes and notaries employed in the first instance by royal states to draft decrees, official correspondence, tax records, and judicial documents (all of which are attested in some form, and described in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*). The conventions thus established were perhaps then adapted to wider uses such as documenting transactions. I

89 All three of these classes of beneficiary are acknowledged in the newly published Mastakaśvabhra copperplate (albeit without mention of *parihāras*, given that it is a deed involving a purchase), which cites it as an established principle: “There is this custom—also by good people in the past, fields in the surroundings of district villages have been purchased from various people of the district, and donated to temples, monasteries and excellent Brahmins” (*astīyaṃ maryaādā pūrvvasādhubhir apy u+pa+krīya nānāvaiśaiyikajanapadād devakulavihārabrāhmaṇaviśeṣebhyo (‘)tisrṣṭāni viśayagrāmamaṇḍalakṣetrāṇi pūrvvarājabhiś cānumoditāni*) (Griffiths 2015: 30–32, ll. 10–11). In this connection, we should note that Kauṭilya, who prescribes that kings should endow Brahmins with land, uses the word *parihāra* in more general contexts, viz., in reference to privileges conferred on the royal servants (*Arthaśāstra* 2.7.2) and privileges that might be associated with houses (2.35.8, with no specific class of beneficiary specified).

would further hypothesize that the shift toward an increasing use of Sanskrit (or Sanskritized registers of other languages) was prompted by the increased representation of Brahmins in the ranks of such professionals during the early part of the first millennium of the Common Era—itself a sociological phenomenon in need for further study.

The unifying factors in this process probably included a tendency of new or upwardly mobile rulers to emulate earlier “great kings” (as Rudradāman and later the Guptas emulated the Mauryas, and as others in Nepal, Bengal, and the South would emulate the Guptas). Another factor, no doubt, was the knowledge networks that produced the literate professionals. During the “Prakrit phase”, this professional network may have followed or even coincided with trade or monastic networks (the former likely explains the Niya documents). Later, the expanding but decentralized network of settlements of Brahmins could yield a ready supply of literate candidates, aided by the caste’s reputation for textual learning and clerical expertise. But these are all hypotheses to be examined on future occasions.

## Appendix: Examples of South Asian Diplomatic Formulae across Languages

The following Prakrit (Pkt., Gandh.) and Sanskrit (Skt.) formulae are widely attested, some of them appearing in other languages, whether using loan-words or calques. Examples are drawn from Classical Tamil (C.T.), Old Javanese (O.J.), Nepali (Nep.), and Newari (New.)

<b>“X petitioned the king”</b>	
Gandh.	<i>ahono iśa X viññāveti yatha ...</i> Now here X makes a request that ...
Skt.	<i>astu vah saṃviditaṃ yathā vijñāpto [’]Jhaṃ vaṇiggrāmeṇa yathā ...</i> Let it be known to you that I have been petitioned by the community of merchants thus ...  <i>X Y Z rājanaka-Viviktasomena vijñapitāḥ ...<sup>a</sup></i> X, Y and Z were petitioned by the <i>rājanaka</i> Viviktasoma [as follows] ...
C.T.	<i>X viṇṇappattāṇ Y āṇattiyāka<sup>b</sup></i> at the request of X, with Y being the executor
O.J.	<i>X mamarahakən i pāduka śrī mahārāja</i> X conveyed a petition at the feet of His Highness the king. <sup>c</sup>
<b>“the king shows favor (grace) by [speaking, issuing an order, endowing property]”</b>	
Skt.	<i>ācārasthitipātram ātmīyaṃ prasādīkurvvantu / sthitipātram prasādīkṛtaṃ<sup>d</sup></i> may [his highness] graciously issue his own charter of customary laws / the charter of laws has been graciously issued
C.T.	<i>tiruvāy moḷintu</i> <i>tiruvāy moḷint-aruḷa/arūḷi</i> <i>tiruvāy moḷint-aruḷiṇār-enru</i> <i>tiruvāy moḷint-aruḷiṇapaṭiḱku</i> <i>tiruvāy moḷint-aruḷiṇamaiyil</i> the royal mouth having spoken the royal mouth having had the grace to speak since the king has graciously told by his sacred mouth <sup>e</sup>
O.J.	<i>X inanugrahān de śrī mahārāja<sup>f</sup></i> X was granted favor by the king <i>sīma anugraha śrī mahārāja<sup>g</sup></i> a freehold ( <i>sīma</i> ) created by the grace of the king

Nep.	<i>bhannyā [yasto] thiti bāṃdhi baksanu bhayo<sup>b</sup></i> (saying) thus, [in this way] the rule ( <i>thiti</i> ) has been graciously established <i>bhannyā dharmā gari baksanu bhayo<sup>i</sup></i> (saying) thus, [in this way] the law ( <i>dharmā</i> ) has been graciously made
New.	<i>prasādālapā</i> graciously granted

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**“this is not to be entered by revenue/conscription officers”**

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Pkt.	<i>a-[bhaḍa-]pāvesam</i> not to be entered [by <i>bhaḍas</i> (officers)]
Skt.	<i>a-cāta-bhaṭa-praveśyaḥ / cāta-bhaṭa-apraveśyaḥ</i> not to be entered by <i>cātas</i> and <i>bhaḍas</i> (officers)
O.J.	<i>tan katamāna deniṅ sa-prakāra niṅ maṅilala drabya haji</i> it may not be entered by any sort of the Beneficiaries of the Royal Property

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**“made tax-free”**

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Aśokan	<i>hida bhagavataṃ jate ti luṃminigāme ubbalike kaṭe aṭhabhāgiye ca<sup>i</sup></i>
Pkt.	Considering that the Lord was born here, [Aśoka “Beloved of the Gods”] <b>made</b> the village of Lumbinī <b>tax-free</b> and provided it with a share in the eight portions [in which the ashes of the Buddha had originally been divided].
C.T.	<i>cantrātittaval iṛaiyilī<sup>k</sup> / iṛaiyiliyāka</i> <b>tax-free</b> as long as the moon and sun / having been made tax-free

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**“as long as the moon and sun”**

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Aśokan	<i>caṃdamasūriyika / ācaṃdamasūliyikam</i>
Pkt.	as long as the moon and sun
Skt.	<i>ā-candrārkaṃ<sup>l</sup> / ā-candrārka-tāra-kālīna<sup>m</sup></i> / etc. as long as the moon and sun [and stars]
Pkt.	<i>ā-canda-tāra-kālīka<sup>n</sup></i> as long as the moon, [sun,] and stars
C.T.	<i>cantrātittaval<sup>o</sup> / cantiratitta-varai</i> as long as the moon and sun
O.J.	<i>kadi lavas saṅ hyaṅ candrāditya hana riṅ ākāśa sumuluhiṅ</i> <i>aṇḍabhuvana/tribhuvana/sakala lokamaṇḍala [tāvāt samaṅkana / lavasnya...]</i> as long as the moon and sun are in the sky, illuminating the universe [so long...] <sup>p</sup>

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**penalties and imprecations**


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- Pkt. *jo amha-sāsanaṃ atichitūna pīlā bādhā karejḡā kārāpejḡā vā tasa amho sārīra[ṃ] sāsanaṃ karejāmo<sup>a</sup>*  
 he who, having violated our order, should cause, or cause others to cause, harm or obstruction, we will inflict corporal punishment on him.  
*atha koci ... pīlā bādhā kareyya kāravejḡā tasa khu amhe niḡahaṃvāraṇa karepyāma tī<sup>b</sup>*  
 now if anyone ... should cause, [or] cause others to cause, harm or obstruction, we shall have him arrested and restrained.
- C.T. *itukku virotaṅ c[e]tārai dhanmāsa[n]a mutal ākat tā[m] veṅṅu kovukku vev[ver]ru vakai irupattu aiṅkaḷaṅcu poṅ manrap peruvārākavum<sup>c</sup>*  
 If anyone violates this [gift], beginning with the *dharmāsanaṃ*, desiring [it?] for themselves, twenty-five gold pieces will be collected for the king.
- O.J. *yāpvan hana<sup>d</sup> vvaṅṅ anyāya asiṅ umulah iki sīma vanva ...<sup>e</sup>*  
 If there is any unrighteous person who disturbs the freehold (*sīma*) village ...  
*yāpvan hana anyāya lumāṅkahanāṅ śāsana laṅghanā i ājṅā haji lumaburra ike vanua i vu(a)tan tija sīma anugraha śrī mahārāja ...<sup>v</sup>*  
 If there is anyone who would unjustly overstep the decree and violate the royal order by destroying this village at Vuatan Tija, a freehold graciously created by the king ...
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- a Kotalipada CP, line 11 (Furui 2013).  
 b E.g., Velurpalaiyam CP, 6th year of Nandivarman III, ll. 48–49 (Lubin 2013: 431); Rayakota CP of Skandaśiṣya, ll. 12–13 (Hultsch 1898–1899: 51).  
 c Barrett Jones (1978: 62–72) discusses several of these formulas. She calls this one “the asking formula”.  
 d Charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa, ll. 3–4 (Lubin 2015: 232).  
 e Vijayavenugopal 2010: 356–357.  
 f For example Kinəvu stone inscription on a Gaṇeṣa statue, ll. 3 and 5 (Brandes 1913: 34).  
 g Vuatan Tija (Mangḡung) CP of śaka 802 (?) = 880 CE, Resink plate, verso, l. 7 (Sarkar 1971: 253).  
 h These examples are from Rāma Śāhaṣ decrees, where the Persian loan-word *bakhs* has replaced the Indo-Aryan *prasāda* or *anugraha*. This phrase—which occurs (with minor variations) at the end of all the edicts except 1–3 and 20 (which employ other *baksanu* phrases)—Riccardi (1977: 41 n. 1) deems “a late addition”, though on what basis is not clear, given that the decrees have not survived in their original forms. The verb *baksanu* (often compounded with a main verb ending in the conjunctive particle *-i*) becomes ubiquitous in Nepali as a “high honorific” form expressing any act performed by a royal; many examples may be found by searching forms of the verb in <http://www.haw.uni-heidelberg.de/forschung/forschungsstellen/nepal/editions.en.html>.  
 i This version appears only in the first *thiti*, which decrees that henceforward Śrī Nandamiśra and his descendants alone will “graciously be appointed” guru to the king (*guru tulyāi baksanu bhāi*).  
 j Following the interpretation of *aṅhabhagiye* proposed by Falk (2012: 215–216), and adapting his translation slightly.



- k Tirumūlanātar Temple, Bahur, year 27 of Kaṅṅaradeva = 966 (Vijayavenugopal 2006: no. 9, ll. 6–7; 2010: 3–4).
- l Very common; an example from Nepal is the Yūpagrāmadrāṅga grant of year 67 = 386 (Regmi 1983: 113, [no. 116, l. 18]), or the Lagan Tol stele above.
- m In many Bagh CPs from Madhya Pradesh (Ramesh/Tewari 1990).
- n Hirahadagalli CP, l. 29 (Mahalingam 1988: 37).
- o Tirumūlanātar Temple, Bahur, year 27 of Kaṅṅaradeva = 966 (Vijayavenugopal 2006: no. 9, l. 6).
- p E.g., Kembang Arum A/B CP of Panggumulan I and II (of 902) and the Lintang CP of 919 (Sarkar 1972: 303, 169); cf. Jaha CP of 840 (Sarkar 1971: 83), and stone inscriptions of 943, 1135 and 1140 from Siman, Ngantang, and Plumbangan, respectively (nos. 48, 68, and 69 in Brandes 1913: 101, 158, 163).
- q Maidavolu CP, lines 21–23 (Mahalingam 1988: 33).
- r Hirahadagalli CP, line 40 (Mahalingam 1988: 38).
- s Bahur inscription, lines 8–11 (Vijayavenugopal 2006: no. 9).
- t Emended; Bosch (1926: 44; and following him Sarkar 1972: 30) prints: *yā suanyana*.
- u Kembang Arum A CP of Panggumulan I, śaka 824 = 902 CE, plate 3, verso, ll. 6–7 (Bosch 1926: 44; Sarkar 1972: 30).
- v Vuatan Tija (Manggung) CP, Resink plate, verso, l. 7 (Sarkar 1971: 253).

## Abbreviations

CP	copperplate inscription
C.T.	Classical Tamil
Gandh.	Gandhari
Guj.	Gujarati
MRE	Minor Rock Edict (of Aśoka)
Nep.	Nepali
New.	Newari
NS	Nepāla Saṃvat
O.J.	Old Javanese
PE	Pillar Edict (of Aśoka)
Pkt.	Prakrit
RE	Rock Edict (of Aśoka)
Skt.	Sanskrit

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